TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 1994

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 10 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr Speaker—

Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill;

Land Title Bill;

Offence Notices Legislation Amendment Bill;

Motor Accident Insurance Bill;

Transport Planning and Coordination Bill;

Sugar Industry Amendment Bill;

Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Bill;

Gladstone Power Station Agreement Amendment Bill;

Penalties and Sentences Amendment Bill;

Traffic Amendment Bill;

Transport Infrastructure Bill;

Industrial Relations Reform Bill.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MIRANI

Resignation of Member

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received the following letter from Mr J. H. Randell, member for the electoral district of Mirani—

"Dear Mr Speaker,

I hereby resign from the Queensland Parliament and as Member for Mirani, to be effective as from 12 midnight on 31 March 1994.

Your sincerely

Jim Randell MLA

Member for Mirani"

By-election Dates

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to inform the House that Her Excellency the Governor had issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Mirani. The dates in connection with the issue of the writ are as follows—

Issue of writ—5 April 1994;

Cut-off day for electoral rolls—9 April 1994;

Nomination day—12 April 1994;

Polling day—30 April 1994;

Return of writ—30 May 1994.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE COMMISSION

Resignation of Mr J. H. Randell

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that a vacancy exists on the Parliamentary Service Commission consequent upon the resignation from the Legislative Assembly of Mr J. H. Randell.

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also advise that the following papers were tabled during the recess in accordance with the list circulated to members in the Chamber—

3 March 1994

Board of Senior Secondary School Studies—Annual Report for 1992-93

15 March 1994

Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council—Annual Report for 1992-93

Island Co–ordinating Council (Torres Strait)—Annual Report for 1992-93

Explanation for the granting of an extension of time for the tabling of these reports

31 March 1994

Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs—Retail Stores Operations—Annual Financial Statement for 1992-93

5 April 1994

Criminal Justice Commission—A Report of an Investigation into the Arrest and Death of Daniel Alfred Yock.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Sky-rail, Cairns and Kuranda

From **Mr Hamill** (119 signatories) praying for a review of the procedure under which the sky-rail proposal between Cairns and Kuranda has been approved or rejection of the development outright.

Legislation relating to Homosexuals

From **Mr Lingard** (52 signatories) praying that proposed legislation allowing for gay couples as in a family unit to adopt children and the lowering of the age of adult consent for homosexual partners be not passed.

Nursing

From **Mr McGrady** (341 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will reject plans by the Minister for Health and his

department to reduce the nursing profession's ability to administer a high standard of patient care.

A similar petition was received from **Mr Nunn** (818 signatories).

Royal Brisbane Hospital, Car Parks

From **Mr Beattie** (1 108 signatories) praying that sufficient funds be made available to construct the two multistorey car parks required on campus for employees of the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Sentencing Procedures; Police Numbers and Powers

From **Mr J. H. Sullivan** (2 485 signatories) praying that relevant legislation in relation to sentencing procedures be amended, that police numbers be increased and that police powers be increased particularly with respect to juveniles.

Petitions received.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

In accordance with the schedule circulated by the Clerk to members in the Chamber, the following documents were tabled—

Aboriginal Land Act—

Aboriginal Land Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 82

Building Act—

Building (Flammable and Combustible Liquids) Regulation 1994, No. 103

Standard Building Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1994, No. 98

Community Services (Aborigines) Act—

Community Services (Aborigines) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 73

Community Services (Torres Strait) Act—

Community Services (Torres Strait) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 74

Consumer Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act—

Proclamation—amendments 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the Retirement Villages Act 1988 and amendments 3, 4, 8, 9 (so far as it inserts new section 6A), 36 and 38 of the Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982, in Schedule 1 to the Consumer Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993 commence 7 March 1994, No. 68

Credit Act—

Credit Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 69

Cremation Act—

Cremation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 105

Electricity Act—

Electricity (Amendment of Effect of Articles and Rules of Superannuation Scheme and Fund for the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry) Regulation 1994, No. 110

Fair Trading Act—

Fair Trading (Prohibition and Restriction of Supply of Goods) Order 1994, No. 87

Fishing Industry Organisation and Marketing Act—

Fishing Industry (Closed Waters—Fish or Marine Products) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 59

Fishing Industry (Use of Nets) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 80

Forestry Act—

Forestry Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 60

Gladstone Power Station Agreement Act—

Electricity (Amendment of Effect of Articles and Rules of Superannuation Scheme and Fund for the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry) Regulation 1994, No. 110

Harbours Act—

Harbours (Board Members Payments) Regulation 1994, No. 78

Harbours (Mackay Port Authority Contribution) Regulation 1994, No. 79

Harbours (Ports Corporation) Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1994, No. 77

Health Act—

Pest Control Operators Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 106

Poisons Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 107

Poisons (Fumigation) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 108

Health Legislation Amendment Act—

Proclamation—provisions of the Act not in force (other than sections 13, 16 and 17 and Parts 10 and 18) commence 14 March 1994, No. 84

Proclamation—section 13, Parts 10, 18 and the Schedule of the Act commence 28 March 1994, No. 104

Indy Car Grand Prix Act—

Indy Car Grand Prix Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 72

Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act—

Proclamation—amendments 4 to 7, 11 and 14 of the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931, in Schedule 1 to the Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 commence 1 April 1994, No. 94

Juvenile Justice Act—

Juvenile Justice (Temporary Detention Centres) Regulation 1994, No. 92

Land Sales Act—

Land Sales (Civic Projects (Raby Bay) Pty Ltd—Nonapplication of Part 2 of Act) Regulation 1994, No. 70

Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act—

Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Regulation 1994, No. 95

Local Government Act—

Local Government (Bundaberg and Burnett) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 99

Local Government (Mackay and Pioneer) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 100

Local Government Regulation 1994, No. 101

Local Government (Transitional) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 61

Local Government (Transitional) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1994, No. 102

Mental Health Act—

Mental Health Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 109

National Parks and Wildlife Act—

National Park 8 County of Vergemont (Declaration) Order 1994, No. 75

National Park 32 County of Leura (Declaration) Order 1994, No. 63

National Park 88 Counties of Ayrshire and Fermoy (Extension) Order 1994, No. 90

National Park 181 Counties of Humboldt and Wooroona (Extension) Order 1994, No. 64

National Park 191 Counties of Bentinck and Clive (Extension) Order 1994, No. 86

National Park 255 County of Herbert (Extension and Exclusion) Order 1994, No. 65

National Park 1383 County of Cook (Extension) Order 1994, No. 91

National Parks Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 76

National Rail Corporation (Agreement) Act—

Amendment to Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia, States of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia relating to the establishment of a National Rail Corporation, dated 30 November 1993

Nursing Act—

Nursing Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1994, No. 62

Plant Protection Act—

Plant Protection (Papaw Ringspot) Quarantine Notice 1994, No. 67

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act—

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing (Vesting of Property and Assumption of Liabilities—Atherton Tableland Maize Marketing Board) Regulation 1994, No. 55

Public Service Management and Employment Act—

Public Service Management and Employment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 88

Sewerage and Water Supply Act—

Sewerage and Water Supply Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 97

Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Act—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act not in force commence 11 March 1994, No. 81

Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Regulation 1994, No. 83

Statutory Instruments Act—

Statutory Instruments Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 93

Stock Act—

Stock (Cattle Tick) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 1994, No. 66

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act—

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Variation of Deed Regulation (No. 1) 1994, No. 71

Superannuation (State Public Sector—Excepted Persons) Regulation 1994, No. 89

Transplantation and Anatomy Act—

Transplantation and Anatomy Regulation 1994, No. 85

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Act—

Notification—(i) that access to land, Bruce Highway (Ayr-Townsville) Townsville City, be limited; (ii) that access to the proposed deviation, Bunya Highway (Kingaroy-Goomeri) Kilkivan Shire, be limited; and (iii) that access to the declared road, Barkly Highway (Cloncurry-Mount Isa) Cloncurry Shire, be limited

Notification—that access to part of the proposed new road, Brisbane-Redland Road Brisbane City, be limited

Water Resources Act—

Water Resources (Yarrabee Coal Company Water Supply Agreement) Regulation 1994, No. 96.

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table—

Minister for Health (Mr Hayward)—

Reviewing the Radioactive Substances Act 1958-1978—Green Paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Westbrook Youth Detention Centre

Hon. A. M. WARNER (South Brisbane—Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: On the evening of 19 March 1994 and into the early hours of Sunday, 20 March 1994, a serious disturbance occurred at Westbrook Youth Detention Centre. This incident involved 31 boys in the remand and Proserpine sections at Westbrook. Extensive damage was caused to both sections rendering them uninhabitable. There was damage to all glass fixtures, metal louvres, fire damage in both sections and destruction of property throughout both sections.

Staff who were able to be recalled to the centre attended and were assisted by police, fire services, ambulance and medical personnel, the State Emergency Service and Queensland Corrective Services Commission staff.

At approximately 1 a.m. on Sunday, 20 March 1994, the situation was brought under control in the Proserpine section with the assistance of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission Dog Squad and departmental staff. Boys from this section were then taken to adult correctional facilities for their secure custody. By 4.30 a.m. on 20 March, all the boys in remand ceased their rioting and were also taken to adult correctional facilities.

I went to the Westbrook Youth Detention Centre on the evening of 19 March 1994 and, when appropriate, briefed the media contingent at the centre. Once the situation had been brought under control and I had personally viewed the damage in both Proserpine and remand sections, I left the centre at 5.30 a.m.

Given the seriousness of the riot, the Government is relieved that there was no loss of life or significant injury to the young people in detention or staff of the combined agencies who intervened to bring the situation under control. I returned to the centre on Tuesday, 22 March 1994 with my director-general to meet with staff——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation in the Chamber.

Ms WARNER:—and discuss the issues arising from the riot. In response to the incident, an immediate investigation was initiated by my director-general. Two senior departmental officers conducted the investigation.

I now seek leave to table a copy of the report of the investigation into the circumstances surrounding incidents at Westbrook Youth Detention Centre.

Leave granted.

Mr Perrett interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barambah!

Ms WARNER: It is clear from the report of the investigation that the location of Westbrook, some 14 kilometres outside Toowoomba, was a significant factor in the length of time in which the situation could be brought under control. Back-up personnel, including skilled negotiators, were some two hours' time away from the centre. Furthermore, the physical layout of the detention centre, including the proximity of adjacent sections, contributed to the escalation of the incident from one unit to the other. The farm setting also contributed to the difficulty of maintaining adequate security around the centre during the incident.

Another factor brought out in the report is that an incident that occurred in the Proserpine section on the afternoon of Saturday, 19 March 1994 may well have been defused if staff had involved a senior officer in mediating the issue of contention between boys and staff. The incident I am referring to here is an allegation by boys in the Proserpine Section that one boy was assaulted by a member of staff while being taken to the maximum security section.

Although both staff and boys who alleged that they observed this incident have been interviewed, this matter appears not to be able to be resolved conclusively, as the boy alleged to be assaulted by the staff member emphatically denies that he was assaulted. In any event, had this situation been defused in the way that I have suggested—that is, through mediation—the events which transpired in the evening may well have been able to be contained.

The events of Saturday night occurred against the backdrop of nine boys absconding on their return from the centre's gymnasium to the Diamantina section on the Friday night. The report states that there had been a level of tension throughout the centre, which was generated by the absconding. Subsequently, staffing levels were increased on the Saturday in response to the levels of tension.

The incidents I have outlined are covered comprehensively in the report, which honourable members should read. The report indicates that there were a number of underlying causes that led to the disturbance on Saturday night. The underlying causes include the relationship between staff and boys, which is

characterised by hostility. The report also comments that there were significant levels of hostility between staff members. I was disturbed and appalled by the level of reported physical abuse of boys by the staff, and the extreme verbal abuse. The abuse can only be described as degrading and inappropriate behaviour that this Government will not tolerate within a youth detention centre.

Similarly, I was disturbed to discover that prescription drugs had been brought into the centre and abused by a number of boys on the nights of 18 and 19 March 1994. It is not known how the drugs were brought into the centre.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs!

Ms WARNER: However, it is suggested in the report that the physical layout of Westbrook significantly compromises efforts to maintain security. It will be clear to honourable members reading this report that, although the report cannot be considered conclusive in its allocation of blame, the report does indicate the scope of the problem. The report is currently being examined in detail to establish whether any matters should be referred to other authorities.

Since September 1993, my department has been reviewing youth detention centre services with a view to their enhancement and appropriate location. This comprehensive review had been finalised and submitted to Government for consideration before the Westbrook riot occurred. The review was initiated through the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and undertaken by my department in consultation with officers of the Administrative Services Department and Treasury. This comprehensive review of all existing youth detention centres concluded that, given the location of Westbrook, the costs involved in any major upgrade of the centre would be absolutely prohibitive.

The review recommended that Westbrook Youth Detention Centre be closed and a new youth detention centre built in close proximity to the Brisbane metropolitan area. The review also recommended that, on completion of the new centre, the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre should also be decommissioned. The Government intends to expedite the implementation of all recommendations of the review. Therefore, Westbrook Youth Detention Centre will close by 30 June 1994. Existing centres at Townsville and Wacol will be enhanced to provide modern, secure detention with an appropriate range of rehabilitation services. To enable the closure of Westbrook Youth Detention Centre to be expedited, minor modifications will be made to the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre at Windsor to upgrade security. On completion of the new detention centre in mid-1996, the centre at Windsor will be decommissioned.

In order to maintain the bed capacity while these changes occur, temporary secure accommodation will be provided at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, Townsville, and John Oxley Youth Detention Centre, Wacol. This temporary accommodation will be of a standard far superior to Westbrook Youth Detention Centre. These actions represent an enormous reform and a complete review of youth detention services in this State. The Government action has been decisive——

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Western Downs under Standing Order 123A!

Ms WARNER:—and our commitment is reflected by the significant resources that will be allocated to this comprehensive reform.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Seizure of Vehicle, Cape Melville National Park

Hon. M. J. ROBSON (Springwood—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (10.15 a.m.), by leave: For some time now, there has been discussion about an incident that occurred in the Cape Melville National Park last November, and events subsequent to that incident. Questions have been asked, and answers provided, about the seizure of a vehicle in that national park by a temporary ranger, the expiration of the 12-week employment of that ranger, and the management of the Cape Melville National Park and the protection of its rare foxtail palms and seeds.

The ranger in question, Mr Pat Shears, has been employed on various projects by the Department of Environment and Heritage over the past eight years. His employment, by agreement, has been regular, although broken. In September 1993, Mr Shears was given a three-month temporary appointment to work in Cape Melville National Park. During this time, Mr Shears was to impart knowledge of park management to two traditional owners of Cape Melville National Park—it is currently under claim under the Aboriginal Land Act—and to report any suspected illegal activity he saw on the park to his superiors in Cairns.

His period of temporary employment expired on 3 December 1993, 12 weeks after it commenced. Mr Shears departed on amicable terms. There was no sacking, no political interference and no reason why Mr Shears will

not be eligible for further appointment in the future. As I have said, Mr Shears' employment was for a period of three months, which was during a significant part of the season when foxtail palm seeds can be harvested. His role was one part of a larger intelligence gathering exercise in and around the Cape Melville National Park and the Cairns region concerning the foxtail palm.

The three-month operation on which Mr Shears was engaged was a major initiative of the Department of Environment and Heritage to combat the illegal harvesting of foxtail palm seeds. It is part of the ongoing cooperation and intelligence gathering on this issue with the Queensland Police, Australian Customs and Coastwatch. We recognise the dangers involved in mounting operations in this region and we are very conscious of the safety of our rangers. To suggest that we have done nothing about the illegal harvesting is wrong.

The wet season, from December to March, makes vehicular movement in the area almost impossible and the alternative, to mount operations from the sea for a protracted period, is a very costly exercise. However, during this period, other investigations have continued away from the park and have produced results, as evidenced by the seizure of foxtail palm seeds at Cairns Post Office in recent weeks. Further interviews are under way this week on other foxtail palm seed related matters, as a result of ongoing investigations by this department and a number of legal searches of premises in the Cairns region last week.

Members of the House may have watched a report on the ABC's *Four Corners* program last night, which dealt in part with a boat being filmed as it was moored near the coastline of Cape Melville National Park. The television story reported that the registration number on the boat was false. Without wanting to jeopardise our ongoing surveillance, I can tell the House that the Department of Environment and Heritage has been watching this vessel for some months. I should also stress that part of Mr Shears' duties in Cape Melville were to familiarise two representatives of the traditional owners with park management principles. This was part of a longer-term surveillance operation that the department has embarked upon, and which will continue into the future, to protect the conservation values of this park and those in the region.

Clearly, the geographic isolation of Cape Melville National Park poses a major challenge to the National Parks Service. It is worth noting that, although Cape Melville National Park was gazetted in 1977, no effective action was taken to address the poaching problem until the Goss Government took the initiative in 1992. As a result of that first initiative, eight people were arrested and charged with a total of 25 offences under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, as well as drug and firearm offences. These arrests were made during an operation at Cape Melville National Park and follow-up investigations.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Foxtail Palms; Mr D. Atkins

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the *Four Corners* program on foxtail palm seed smuggling from Cape Melville National Park and to the assertion on the program that the Premier's media adviser, Mr Dennis Atkins, misled Parliament with his advice to the Environment Minister in February over his presence at a meeting in the Cooktown Police Station on 13 November last year. I now table a statement from former ranger Pat Shears also declaring that Mr Atkins was not present at the interview, as he had claimed and as the Parliament had been informed. I ask: what action does the Premier propose to take?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I will tell the House what action Mr Atkins would like to take, and I have some sympathy for it. I watched the *Four Corners* program last night. I think it was very appropriate that it was followed by an item by Stuart Littlemore on the code of ethics. *Four Corners*—a quality program that I think is a very good program—descended to the Pat Gillespie level, which is good Sunday tabloid reading, but one expects something different from *Four Corners*, because it is really quite a different medium, and I would have thought it would have had a different result.

Throughout this incident and the coverage of it in the media—which has been led by the *Sunday Mail*—we have seen a mixture of some facts, a fair bit of innuendo and a fair bit of mystery about all sorts of things that somehow characterise the incident which occurred and which has been the subject of so much debate. The *Four Corners* program did the same thing: it mixed in some facts, a fair bit of innuendo and quite a bit of mystery to give a nice colour and a dramatic feel to the whole thing. One particular element of the mystery that the program threw in was the question referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. At one stage during the program, the *Four Corners* reporter intoned gravely that they had statements from two or three people—I forget what they were, and this is obviously one of them—that Mr Atkins, my principal media

adviser, was not in fact at that meeting at the Cooktown Police Station.

Mr Atkins would like to agree with those people and put himself right out of the frame. I thought the characters opposite were suggesting that Mr Atkins was at the Cooktown Police Station heavying someone or somehow improperly interfering with something. If they now want to say that he was not there-——

Mr Borbidge: He said he was there.

Mr W. K. GOSS: Yes, Mr Atkins did say that he was there. However, I am saying to the Leader of the Opposition that, if he wants to say that Mr Atkins was not there, I will agree with him, and we will settle it on that basis. I am just trying to accommodate members opposite. I thought they were saying that Mr Atkins was at the police station doing something improper. However, if members opposite want to say that he was not there, I am prepared to agree with them. I do not understand the tactics of the Opposition, but I will go with them.

Mr Atkins assures me that the facts as outlined in the statement which he gave to Mrs Robson and which she outlined to the House are accurate. Mr Atkins wishes that he had never gone near the area. As the journalist said last night, Mr Atkins hit what is known in this business as a wall of bad luck. But seriously, if members opposite want to say that Mr Atkins was not there, we can go with that. If that is the tactic of the Opposition, that is fine. I thought that its spokesman up the back there——

Mr Borbidge: What is the fact? What is the truth? Who are you protecting?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The Leader of the Opposition is the master of smear and grubby innuendo. This incident occurred late last year. At no stage has the master of smear made any allegation. Where is the evidence of wrongdoing? Where is the evidence of a law having been broken? Where is the evidence of impropriety? Despite all the huff and puff about this incident and despite all the smokescreens and the smears that have been run, to my understanding there is still—not even from *Four Corners*—no evidence of any wrongdoing or impropriety.

The CJC investigation into the incident is ongoing. I do not know why that investigation is taking so long, but it is still going on.

Mr Beanland: Oh!

Mr W. K. GOSS: It has been going on for quite some time. I would like to see the matter cleared up, and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would also like to see it cleared up. As soon as we have it cleared up and as soon as we have the CJC report on what was supposed to have happened and what was supposed not to have happened and who was there and who was not there, then I believe we will have a basis on which to proceed.

Mr D. Barbagallo

Mr BORBIDGE: In directing a further question to the Premier, I refer to the involvement of a member of his personal staff, Mr David Barbagallo, in an interview at the Cooktown Police Station on 13 November in which a former National Parks ranger was interrogated following an incident in Cape Melville National Park, and I ask: was the Premier aware and did he approve of Mr Barbagallo's involvement in that police interview?

Mr W. K. GOSS: "No" and "no".

Drought Relief

Mr PITT: In directing a question to the Treasurer, I refer to his visit last week to various centres in central and western Queensland, and I ask: can he give an assurance that the State Government will continue to provide drought relief assistance to rural producers, even though in February widespread rains were received in many areas?

Mr Johnson: Tell us about the people the QIDC are screwing. What are you going to do about that?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Gregory under Standing Order 123A.

Mr De LACY: Having had two months to think of a few good ones, one would have thought that the level of interjections would have improved.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the Treasurer answer the question.

Mr De LACY: The short answer to the question is, "Yes". I give a commitment on behalf of the Queensland Government that we will retain the whole range of schemes of assistance to drought-affected producers and drought-affected shires until such time as it is no longer needed.

In general terms, after my visit last year to some areas that were previously very badly droughted, I would have to say that both the physical outlook and the psychological outlook have changed dramatically in the last few months. I visited some of those places last year, and they were the scene of utter desolation. Now, I would have to say that the season appears to have changed, and people are looking forward to the future with a great deal more optimism.

However, I recognise—as does the Government—that the fact that widespread rains have occurred does not mean that the problems have been solved. The cash flow situation will not change for some time. Among grain producers, it cannot change until after the winter crop—presuming that we have a good winter crop. In respect of some livestock producers, it could be up to three years before the financial situation improves as a result of the change in the seasons. We recognise that, and that is why I am prepared to give a commitment that we will continue the Government's schemes of assistance.

There is one other point that I should make, that is, among rural producers generally and among rural organisations in particular there is widespread appreciation of the role played by the Queensland Government during this dreadful drought. I was interested in watching the Leader of the Opposition talking to the UGA people the other day. He said that the Goss Government does nothing for rural producers. The only people who believe that now are the people who sit on the other side of the House, because, universally, rural producers and rural organisations appreciate the constructive role played by the Goss Government during this drought and, I might say, they are not reluctant to say so.

National Australia Bank Survey

Mr PITT: I refer the Treasurer to media reports of a National Australia Bank survey which suggested that Queensland companies are predicting a slowdown in growth. I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House whether the media reports have accurately interpreted the National Australia Bank survey? Can he also tell the House what other recent studies are saying about the outlook for Queensland?

Mr De LACY: I think it is fair to say that the media reports did not properly reflect the National Australia Bank survey. If honourable members read that survey, they will see that it shows once again that the Queensland economy and Queensland business are travelling very well. It reports that 30 per cent of firms experienced good to very good profitability in the December quarter. It also makes the point—and I think this point ought to be made—that when one compares the performance of Queensland with the performance of other States, one finds that Queensland has had very high levels of growth for two years now, whereas places such as Victoria have had no growth or negative growth. When a comparison is made between the growth figures for Victoria and those for the rest of Australia, of course they look good for a while. I think we are all pleased to see that we are starting to get a bit of growth in the rest of Australia. However, it is important to look at all the surveys, because surveys do tell a story. This Government will never walk away from surveys.

Other surveys show that bankruptcies in Queensland fell 8.8 per cent in the December quarter. New business name registrations increased by 3 355 in the December quarter. The latest profit reports to March 1994 show that after-tax profits of Queensland's top 20 listed companies increased by 30 per cent. The recently released *Yellow Pages Small Business Index* revealed that confidence in business prospects for the next 12 months was significantly higher in Queensland. The December quarter 1993 Ernst and Young Business Stress Index showed a 36 per cent decrease in stress sales in Queensland, and so it goes on and on.

Surveys do tell a story; they always tell a story. Saturday's *Courier-Mail* published another survey which showed that 17 per cent of Queenslanders approved of the performance of the Opposition Leader—17 per cent! When it came to the preferred Premier, that survey showed that 12 per cent of the people of Queensland prefer the Opposition Leader—12 per cent! The same newspaper contained another survey from England. The accompanying article stated——

> "The Gallup poll showed that no Prime Minister and no government had fallen so far and so fast in people's estimation since the organisation first started polling in Britain in the 1930s.
>
> Only 21 per cent of those polled were satisfied with Mr Major's performance . . ."

That is the worst result in 60 years. Mr Major has an approval rating of 21 per cent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that this is not relevant to the question. The Treasurer should get back to making a relevant answer.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has made his point; he is labouring it now.

Mr De LACY: I think the Minister on my left made a good point. Let us read the surveys, which say a lot. They say that the approval rating of Mr Borbidge makes John Hewson and John Major look good; it makes them look like winners.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mrs SHELDON: I refer the Premier to the dubious excursion to Cairns and Cooktown

undertaken by David Barbagallo and Dennis Atkins late last year. Given that, first, they were travelling on the Premier's instructions, second, they never completed the job assigned to them and, third, they spent much of their time assisting Mr Barbagallo's brother instead of doing their job, I ask: will the Premier table their travel schedule, itinerary, air tickets, accommodation and receipts, together with any report they submitted to him on their return from this taxpayer-funded excursion?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I make the point again that, despite all of the allegations and smears being tossed around by the other side, the Opposition has not alleged or presented any evidence of any wrongdoing or impropriety. There is no evidence, so there is nothing for me to act on. What has intervened in this sort of bucket job is that the CJC has announced a formal investigation. There is an investigation into this matter.

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: The honourable member should not blame me for that. The Opposition initiated that by having the Opposition spokesman think that he could score a point using the shabby trick he picked up from the Leader of the Opposition over the Tait affair. The Opposition makes a complaint and then leaks the correspondence between itself and the CJC to the media. The Opposition has done that and it has an investigation. The CJC is investigating all of those matters. It has full access to all of the documentation the honourable member is talking about. I am going to await the CJC investigation into all of those matters and we will canvass where it goes from there when we have some findings from the CJC.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mrs SHELDON: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to his dismissal of David Barbagallo following his involvement in the Starcke scouting trip late last year and to the involvement of his media adviser Dennis Atkins in the same dubious exercise. Given the tangled web that Mr Atkins has woven——

Government members interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I am sorry, I did not hear most of the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Repeat the question, please.

Mrs SHELDON: Certainly, Mr Speaker. I suggest the Premier control his own troops.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Can I suggest to members who cackled at that remark that if they stopped cackling, maybe we would all hear the question.

Mrs SHELDON: When the Premier resumes his seat, I will ask the question.

Mr J. H. Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Caboolture!

Mrs SHELDON: That is pretty pathetic behaviour from the Premier. In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to his dismissal of David Barbagallo following his involvement in the Starcke scouting trip late last year and to the involvement of his media adviser, Dennis Atkins, in the same dubious exercise. Given the tangled web that Mr Atkins has woven in his misleading statements to the media and to his false claims about being present during the police interview of Pat Shears in Cooktown, I ask: how does the Premier account for the fact that three out of five people present at the interview claim Mr Atkins was not present, and when will he complete the job and sack Mr Atkins, or is there some reason that he prefers to be advised and represented in the media in such a manner?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I think there are two main elements to the question. The first one is the suggestion that Mr Barbagallo was dismissed. I forget exactly when—it would have been a good month or so prior to this unfortunate incident—Mr Barbagallo approached me and told me that he had applied for and had good prospects of getting a position as the chief executive of a research centre being established by Government and the private sector at the university. His main interest and his main area of expertise is, in fact, in information technology and he had had a longstanding interest in pursuing that. As I said, I was given that advice well before this incident and if I recall correctly, he was in fact successful and awarded the position prior to undertaking this particular visit to north Queensland. There is no suggestion of a dismissal. In fact, I was sorry to lose David. Unfortunately, he was able to get better money——

Mr Borbidge: Why did you send someone up there who was leaving?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Because I was not going to let him sit around on his backside. I told him that I wanted him to continue until the end of the year because there were tasks that were required to be carried out. He would have liked to go sooner because of that position. Good luck to him. He got better money and a better boss. He thought that he would not have to put up with the sort of nonsense that members opposite go on with, but they are haunting him even after he

has gone. There is just no foundation to that particular suggestion.

There is another more intriguing and more interesting element of the member's question which fascinates me. Usually, Government members have a bit of a chat in the morning and ask, "What do you think their tactics will be?" We canvass among ourselves what we think might be sensitive issues upon which we might be pinned to the wall. But we are always wrong. Opposition members never chase those issues. The Opposition has had a month to work on this. Members of the brains trust on the other side of the House have come up with the notion that they are going to drive home the point and try to convince us that Dennis Atkins was not there. Let me repeat that I would dearly love to have a situation in which Dennis Atkins was not there. He would like to have not been there.

As to the incident when something untoward is supposed to have occurred—why would Dennis Atkins put himself in the frame if he was not there? I cannot work it out. I thought that the member was saying that Dennis Atkins was up there doing something wrong. If he now wants to say that he was not there, I will agree with him. I ask the Leader of the Opposition: please tell me what you want. What an incompetent Opposition! Come on! Give us some decent questions. Please give us some decent questions.

All of these matters are now the subject of a formal investigation by the CJC that was requested by the Opposition. It started this investigation. The CJC will investigate all those matters, including independent travel records, which show that the particular trip was booked before the incident involving Mr Shears when he took off with the four-wheel-drive vehicle.

I accept the truthfulness of what Mr Atkins has told me. I accept the account that he has given. I will not be budged from that position until the Leader of the Opposition or somebody else can produce evidence to the contrary. Not one scintilla of evidence to the contrary has been produced. There is nothing new. The Opposition has tripped itself up by now trying to allege that one of my staff was not there.

Treatment of Whistleblower

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Premier: has his attention been drawn to an article in the *Australian* newspaper about the unfair treatment of a whistleblower social worker who had uncovered rorting and was suspended and who was investigated by the Criminal Justice Commission?

Mr W. K. GOSS: In November last year, an article in the *Australian* contained some allegations that were provided to that newspaper by an academic called Dr De Maria from the University of Queensland's Social Work Department. Subsequently, the Government received a letter from the member for Indooroopilly raising concerns about some of those allegations. I believe that letter was written in December. I must apologise to Mr Beanland for taking so long to reply to his letter. Members will perhaps understand when I explain further.

The article in the *Australian*, which commented on the research report from Dr De Maria, stated—

> "A Queensland social worker who uncovered rorting of overtime and government cars was suspended and then investigated by the Criminal Justice Commission . . ."

The article went on to put the proposition that this person was somehow hardly done by and oppressed as a result of being a whistleblower. It was among dozens of case studies that the University of Queensland researchers claimed to have identified as part of a research project. I note those words. This was supposed to be serious academic research. They were case studies. Dr De Maria told the *Australian* newspaper—

> ". . . the case in which the social worker had been investigated and subjected to a closed hearing by the CJC highlighted the dark side of whistleblowing.
>
> She had been 'marked' from the time she started work as a senior official . . ."

The article stated further—

> "The worker said that she was subsequently submitted to a horrific closed CJC hearing where she was grilled relentlessly with no recourse to natural justice."

If they are interested, members can read the rest of that article.

When I received that letter from Mr Beanland, I wrote to the CJC asking, "What is going on here? We need to provide an answer to the member." Obviously, we would have been concerned if serious academic research had turned up such a case, because we were not aware of it. The Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr O'Regan, wrote to me in late February and referred to Mr Beanland's queries. Mr O'Regan apologised for not responding earlier. The reason that it took the CJC so long to respond was that it could not work out who that whistleblower was. It had trouble identifying that

whistleblower. In fact, it could not identify that person. In his letter, Mr O'Regan stated—

> "As a last resort one of the Commission's officers contacted Dr De Maria to seek more information and was advised that he"—

that is, Dr De Maria—

> "frequently gives inaccurate details of whistleblower's situations to the media to ensure the confidentiality of complainants is maintained."

This was serious academic research, but "he frequently gives inaccurate details of whistleblower's situations to the media". Mr O'Regan went on to say—

> "Regrettably, in this case, the inaccurate detail"—

provided by the good doctor—

> "extends . . . to seminal facts which would qualify the complainant as a whistleblower."

I shall table this letter, but I shall read a couple more extracts from it. Mr O'Regan stated—

> "The Commission did investigate a complaint from a government agency accusing an officer 'of leaking an audit report . . . ' "

By the way, the officer concerned was not a social worker—as an item of detail for an academic social worker. That officer was required to attend an investigative hearing. To protect her and the other witnesses in the matter, the hearings were not held in public. Mr O'Regan said—

> "I reject totally the suggestion that 'she was grilled relentlessly with no recourse to natural justice'.
>
> The subject officer was entitled to have legal representation at her interview and during the hearing if she wished and was given an opportunity to answer all of the allegations . . ."

Mr O'Regan stated that at the end of the process—

> ". . . the accusations (against her) which appeared to have substance at the outset, were determined not to be substantiated . . ."

by the commission. Mr O'Regan stated further——

Mrs Sheldon: How long is this going to take?

Mr W. K. GOSS: As long as it needs to take. Mr O'Regan stated further—

> "This officer . . . had made previous complaints to the Commission but that was when she was employed as a newspaper journalist and she had passed on allegations of misconduct by local authority members."

The last point that Mr O'Regan made was—

> "The complaints this woman made were not against colleagues or superiors and the Commission is aware of no connection between the complaints the subject officer previously made and the complaint made against her. Indeed, she did not allege that the complaint was motivated by the complaints she had previously made . . ."

I have nothing against academics from the University of Queensland's Social Work Department. In fact, I think it is probably fair to use the cliche that some of my best friends have come from that particular institution. But in this particular case an academic, who was carrying out what has been described as serious research, admitted—when contacted by the CJC—that he frequently gives inaccurate details of whistleblowers' situations to the media.

This Government will encourage and protect genuine whistleblowers, but there is a difference between people who blow the whistle and people who simply want to blow their own trumpets.

Job Creation

Mr LIVINGSTONE: My second question is directed to the Treasurer. I refer to the State Government's commitment since its election in 1989 to develop the right economic environment to create jobs, and I ask: can the Treasurer inform the House of the record of the Government in job creation?

Mr De LACY: In March, an important milestone was reached. Since the election of the Goss Government, 100 000 additional jobs have been created in Queensland.

An Opposition member: How many have you lost? What about the railways?

Mr De LACY: Let me rephrase that—100 000 net jobs have been created in Queensland. What that means, for members of the Opposition who have a lot of difficulty understanding statistics, is that 100 000 more Queenslanders were working at the end of March than were working in December 1989—100 000 more! In fact, in January 1990, 1 310 400 Queenslanders were working, and in March 1994, the figure was 1 410 900. That is an increase of 100 500. To put that into context, in

the rest of Australia during that period 110 000 jobs were lost. In the rest of Australia there are still not as many people working as at the end of March as there were in December 1989. But at the end of that same period, there are 100 000 more people working in Queensland. To put it into context a little better, when we first assumed Government, the National Party made great play of the fact that employment numbers were going down, and that was true. Between December 1989 and May 1991, 20 000 jobs were lost. Week after week, members of the National Party used to rise in this place and say, "The Goss Government is not running this State properly because it is losing jobs." Of course, those National Party members were losing sight of the fact that it was their policies that, in the early days, had created the circumstances that resulted in that loss of jobs. However, since about May 1991, 120 000 new jobs have been created. Of course, we lost 20 000 during that first 18 months. I think that if members opposite were genuine Queenslanders, they would say that, in respect of employment creation, Queensland has done a great job and the Queensland Government has done a great job.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK: My first question is directed to the Premier. It relates to the matter that this morning, in this Parliament, he has been implying is a joke. I ask the Premier: who authorised the visit to the Starcke/Cape Melville area by his two senior staff members, David Barbagallo and Dennis Atkins, and when was this visit, which took place in the middle of a parliamentary sitting, authorised?

Mr W. K. GOSS: I authorised it. I do not remember the exact date that I authorised it.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK: My second question is directed to the Premier and relates to the same subject. I refer to the ABC's *Four Corners* program last night and the involvement of two of the Premier's senior personal staff who alleged that they were in the area primarily to check out the Starcke property with a view to a possible visit by the Premier—a visit that never occurred. I ask: why did the Premier's office fail to contact the landowner to seek permission for such a visit, even for the initial reconnaissance by his staff, as surely a proposed visit by a Premier to the property would have demanded that certain protocol be followed?

Mr Goss: I didn't hear anything after "I ask".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to read the question again.

Mr SLACK: I ask: why did the Premier's office fail to contact the land-holder, Mr Quaid, to seek permission for such a visit, even for the initial reconnaissance by his staff, as surely a proposed visit by a Premier to the property would have demanded that certain protocol be followed?

Mr W. K. GOSS: Yes, I authorised it. The detail was left for Mr Barbagallo. The trip was to occur at a time when fairly sensitive negotiations with the Aboriginal community were under way. I think there were also discussions between officers of the Department of Lands and Mr Quaid. As I understood the advice coming to me at that time, Mr Quaid was fairly relaxed about the process that the Government was undertaking, and in particular, in the absence of agreement, a determination being made by an independent body. In terms of the arrangements that Mr Barbagallo made, they were a matter for him. I repeat that the trip was to occur at a time of some sensitive negotiations and was not a matter that needed to be advertised.

Specialist Medical Practitioners, Gladstone

Mr BENNETT: I ask the Minister for Health: is he aware of recent reports in the Gladstone media about the difficulty in attracting obstetric and gynaecological specialists to Gladstone to replace the ones who left last year? If the Minister is so aware, could he inform the House of efforts being made to attract specialists to Gladstone and other rural areas?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Minister for Health, I must say that I am less than impressed with the sound system in this Chamber. I admit that something ought to be done about it. Nevertheless, in the meantime, I insist that members on both sides of the Chamber are silent when a question is being asked. The situation has become intolerable. I could not hear all of that question because of noise coming from my right. On a previous occasion it was because of noise coming from my left. I am asking members to be quiet. I am going to have to deal very firmly with members who talk or yell out while a question is being asked.

Mr HAYWARD: I thank the honourable member for his question. The simple fact is that it is difficult to attract specialists to work in hospitals in many rural and provincial parts of Queensland. There is a variety of reasons, of which most of us would be aware, as to why that occurs. The principal ones are issues relating to professional isolation. In places such as Brisbane, the opportunity exists to work in the larger teaching

hospitals. Importantly, the personal and family links which people establish in cities such as Brisbane cause them to be unable to shift into rural and provincial areas.

Queensland Health has undertaken a number of initiatives to address this problem. Those initiatives are pretty clear and are known to most people in this Parliament. Importantly, we have been able to renegotiate the visiting medical officers award, which offers four specialists who work on a sessional basis as visiting medical officers pay rises of up to 15 per cent over the next two years. We have enabled pay rises to be made available for full-time medical specialists, and such specialists, if they take the option B arrangement—which means that they hand over their Medicare provider number to the public hospital—increase their salary by 22.5 per cent. Importantly, through the $1.5 billion Hospital Rebuilding Program we have been able to begin to develop specialist services for cardiac procedures and cancer services in Townsville. That will make it much more attractive for medical specialists to leave the security and professional comfort zone of Brisbane and other major capital cities in Australia.

Most importantly, the establishment of a north Queensland clinical school based in Townsville will, hopefully, see graduates who have been trained in that area of north Queensland develop an interest in rural practice, develop and maintain contacts within that community, and work as specialists in those areas. When I refer to the matters raised by the member for Gladstone, I point out that he should be praised personally for what he has done. The prominent role that he has taken is very important. Members in provincial and rural Queensland have to encourage people by explaining—personally if possible, and I cannot see any reason why members who are representative of rural and provincial Queensland cannot take an opportunity to explain to people who apply; the regional health authorities will make information available to them—the good points about the communities in which the members live. The member for Gladstone has undertaken to do that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for questions has now expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (11 a.m.): Today, the Opposition will call for widened terms of reference for a public inquiry by the Criminal Justice Commission into the Cape Melville affair.

Last night, on *Four Corners*, yet more questions were raised about the extraordinary events surrounding a trip to Cooktown last November by the Premier's then two most senior personal staff. Those staff were the Premier's then private secretary, Mr David Barbagallo, who has since resigned, and his current media adviser, Mr Dennis Atkins. The events that are of concern also involve directly the clearly politicised Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage, Dr Craig Emerson, who is not only a member of the Labor Party but also a would-be candidate for a Federal ALP House of Representatives seat, and his northern regional director, Mr Greg Wellard.

I want to stress that, at this stage, the Opposition draws no conclusions from the developing body of evidence surrounding matters it has raised in the House either today, or in the February sitting, any more than it draws adverse conclusions from what was presented on *Four Corners* last night. However, here we are dealing with nothing less than at least the possibility of a deliberate effort from a person or persons within the Premier's office, through Dr Emerson and through Mr Wellard, to pervert the course of justice in order to protect from criminal prosecution the brother of the Premier's then private secretary.

For the benefit of honourable members who may not have followed this matter closely, I point out that these serious issues have developed from the seizure in Cape Melville National Park on 11 November by a then, but since sacked, national park ranger, Mr Pat Shears, of a four-wheel-drive utility owned by Mr Paul Barbagallo of Innisfail, the brother of the Premier's then private secretary, Mr David Barbagallo. That vehicle was seized within sight of a stand of foxtail palms, which are unique to the Cape Melville area, and which are the subject of a highly illegal trade in seeds. The day following that seizure, both Mr David Barbagallo and Mr Atkins flew to Cairns, hired a four-wheel-drive vehicle and drove to Cooktown, allegedly on a prearranged visit to consult with Mr Paul Barbagallo over a proposed visit by the Premier to the Starcke River station, which adjoins the Cape Melville National Park, and which the Government was then in the process of acquiring.

Already, in the very opening gambit, the official account stretches credibility. We must believe in Martians! We are asked to accept that, over a weekend squeezed between two parliamentary sitting weeks, both of the Premier's two most senior personal staff were required to travel from Brisbane to Cairns and back to plan a trip for the Premier, which never took place, using as their allegedly expert consultant on Starcke station and all associated environmental and logistical issues an Innisfail banana farmer,

whose principal qualification appears to be merely that he is the brother of the Premier's then private secretary. Surely the local national parks people, or even the Lands Department people charged with the acquisition of Starcke by their Minister on the very day of the seizure, would have had better qualifications for that task. What were the qualifications for the task—above those of the on-the-spot departmental people—of an Innisfail banana farmer beyond his relationship with the Premier's private secretary? In what ways did he assist all the Premier's men, and when?

If we accept the Government's position, the timetable for all involved is positively dizzying. Mr David Barbagallo and Mr Atkins say that they arrived in Cairns on 12 November and drove to Cooktown on that day, which is a journey of about five hours. Both then allegedly spent time at the Cooktown Police Station on the morning of the thirteenth and then were allegedly back in Brisbane on the fourteenth! Apparently, in there somewhere, Mr Atkins managed to dash out to Starcke homestead, which takes about an hour and a half by car, and back. Whether or not he was in the company of Paul Barbagallo, this exercise would have been capable of teaching him next to nothing about either the environment of Starcke station or the logistics of a trip by the Premier—even a trip that did not happen.

The Starcke homestead is at one extremity of the station, far from points of environmental interest, and if Mr Atkins had wanted to establish the state of the road from Cooktown to the homestead, which is about the sum of the worthwhile information that he could have achieved from such an exercise, he could have achieved the same much more simply by a phone call from Brisbane. Therefore, the dash to the Starcke homestead has all the hallmarks of a fig leaf.

The plausibility of the movements of Mr Paul Barbagallo are in the same category. We are told by *Four Corners* that, only on 10 November, Mr Paul Barbagallo and his companions arrived at Cape Melville, which I am told is an extremely arduous 12 hours to 15 hours four-wheel driving from Cooktown. Almost incredibly, to make his scheduled rendezvous with the Premier's men in Cooktown on the twelfth, he would have had to turn around almost immediately.

In order to make yet another rendezvous with yet another Barbagallo brother in a trawler off Cape Melville on the thirteenth, Paul Barbagallo would have barely had the time for a quick chat with David Barbagallo and Mr Atkins before again confronting the arduous trip to the cape. We are also asked to accept, even today by the Premier, that on Sunday, 14 November, both Mr David Barbagallo and Mr Atkins returned to Brisbane via Cairns. But did they? It seems that Mr Atkins did. But then Mr Atkins has also told this Parliament, through the Minister for Environment and Heritage, that he was at the Cooktown Police Station on the morning of Saturday, 13 November, when Mr Paul Barbagallo and his companion, Mr Gordon Euchtritz, arrived there to discuss the seizure of their vehicle in the national park two days earlier.

According to the statement Mr Atkins provided to the Minister, he attended that meeting with David Barbagallo, Paul Barbagallo, Gordon Euchtritz, the ranger Pat Shears and police officer Spud Murphy. Last night, *Four Corners* said that three of the people at the meeting say only a total of five people were present and that Mr Atkins was not one of them. What, then, are we to make of another of Mr Atkins' claims, which is that when he telephoned Labor's would-be Federal candidate, comrade Emerson, he merely discussed what constituted the appropriate use of private vehicles in national parks? Can we believe him? Can we believe the Premier? Or did these men discuss something much more far reaching? Did Mr Atkins call on Dr Emerson to take care of Paul Barbagallo's problem?

If *Four Corners* is right and Mr Atkins is wrong about his whereabouts on the morning of Saturday, 13 November, is it possible he is wrong as well about the content of his conversation with Dr Emerson? There is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that, subsequently, there was an attempt to nobble the investigation. And what of the whereabouts of Mr David Barbagallo? The assumption is that he returned to Brisbane on Sunday, 14 November, with Mr Atkins. The possibility is that, thinking the seizure problem was history, David Barbagallo went into the scrub with his brother Paul. That is precisely what Paul Barbagallo reportedly told the *Innisfail Advocate* in this article in that journal of 30 November, which I now table, and which the author vehemently stood by on *Four Corners* last night.

The responses of key players in this matter are all over the place to the extent that the numerous contradictions, the many apparent stumbles, and the many plain implausibilities concerning people who, in very large part, make their living and have earned their station by exercising authority with clarity and accuracy, simply serve to heighten the Opposition's suspicion and concern about this entire episode.

Today, I call on the CJC to expand its inquiry beyond the matters that have been brought to its attention to date, and to make the inquiry public.

This matter is now a test of the accountability and the credibility of this Government. If the Government has nothing to hide, why is it that the Premier will not table the travel details? We have this allegation that, somehow, the Opposition forced a CJC investigation. All that happened was that the Opposition conveyed information to the CJC and the CJC made a decision itself that this matter warranted a full and detailed investigation, an investigation that goes right into the office of the Premier of Queensland. This is now too important; the questions are now too many, too unanswered, for this inquiry to proceed in camera. The terms of reference must now be widened. The inquiry must now be made public.

Proposed Amalgamation of National and Liberal Parties

Mr NUNN (Hervey Bay) (11.10 a.m.): This is not the first time that I have had to draw the attention of this House to the absence of a worthwhile and credible Opposition in this Parliament. This morning's effort reinforced the perception that there is no decent Opposition. The Premier had to almost get down on his knees and plead with the Opposition for some decent questions. It could not raise issues. It could not ask a decent question. It practically does not exist.

Last year, the Nationals and the Liberals went before the people of Queensland through the media. In effect, they had this to say: "We know we have not been performing well. We know that it is virtually impossible for us to perform well, but we are determined to do better. We know we have no credibility in the electorate, but we will try our hardest to do better." Mr Borbidge and Mrs Sheldon said, on the premise that unlike poles attract, "We will amalgamate." They said that even though the Liberals cannot stand the blatant hypocrisy and downright dishonesty of the Nationals, and also the corruption, cronyism and political patronage that pervades the National Party's philosophy. They said that despite the fact that they took no part in the Joh jury rigging scandal, and even though they did not lie under oath before Mr Justice Carter. Despite all of this, the Liberals were prepared to make the supreme sacrifice and amalgamate.

The Nationals, for their part, even though they cannot stand the wimpish, do nothing, "you can't blame us because we aren't here" and "you can't see us" attitude of the Liberals—and even though they loathe and despise the Liberals—were prepared also to sacrifice their principles and amalgamate. The Queensland coalition promised Queenslanders that an amalgamation would produce an Opposition so tightly structured, capable, finely honed and razor sharp that it would strike terror into the hearts of Labor ranks and herald a great victory that would return them to the Treasury benches. Their curious theory was that the amalgamation of these two parties—one, once great; the other, never so great—would produce talent and ability where none existed before.

The proposition was put to the rank and file of these parties. It was claimed to have had 80 per cent support. Amalgamation had so much support that the rank and file threw it back in the face of the Liberal and National Party leaders—they threw it back. With great timing, the death of the grand strategy was announced on the eve of the Brisbane City Council election. By the way, that was the only local authority election in Queensland where the conservative candidates did not use as their catchcry "no politics in local government". How often did we hear it?

So the promise is broken—no amalgamation, no strong Opposition, no ascendancy to the Treasury benches. They are nothing other than a group of befuddled second-raters who like being in Opposition. They like it, because they can take it easy. They do not have to produce or perform. They can criticise in comfort. They can harp and carp secure in the knowledge that they are not accountable. These are desperate times for the coalition. Its desperation is mirrored not only in the polls but also in the electorate of Hervey Bay.

In March 1993, the Nationals endorsed their candidate in Hervey Bay. To do him credit, he has made a great hand of putting his foot in his mouth ever since. However, the Nationals in Hervey Bay have devised a great strategy. In the last two State elections, the Liberals have run last in Hervey Bay. So in this new found chumminess, there will be no Liberal candidate. What will it do? Wait for it—the brains of the National Party are scouting around among their supporters for someone they can present to the electorate as an independent Labor candidate. For God's sake! It has been rolled out that many times that they think the electorate will not see through it. This person is not to distribute preferences. His job will be to snare enough of the Labor vote to catapult young Tony into the seat. Members should not forget that the Nationals managed to defeat Labor's Jim Blake some years ago by standing two National Party candidates against him. So devious strategies are not foreign to these people.

But there is much more—and I know members want more. There is the Bill O'Chee

strategy, which is pretty well stitched up. Disenchanted as they are with the Borbidge and Sheldon leadership fiasco, the Nationals and the Liberals are devising new and desperate long-range strategies. Mr O'Chee is to vacate his position in the Senate to stand for a State seat, whereupon—and after a decent interval—he will challenge for the leadership and tip poor old Rob off the top rung. How would the coalition look then? "Bill O' and Santo": what a double for a toothpaste ad; more teeth than a circular saw. I do not think old "Bill O'" will fall for this. He is pretty comfortable in the Senate. Why should he risk all to become the leader of this raggle-taggle mob who disgrace the Opposition benches? Honourable members do not have to take my word for any of this. They should talk to some of the disenchanted, disgruntled and disillusioned coalitionists. That is what I did. That is where I got my information. We all know that their supporters would not lie.

In my remaining time, I would like to address the matter of the member for Indooroopilly and his travelling one-man crime show. Mr Beanland, the member for Indooroopilly, goes around the country, taking with him a one-man crime wave.

Mr Bredhauer: Whipping up apathy.

Mr NUNN: Whipping up apathy is what he is good at. But Mr Beanland has this crime wave all to himself. It does not exist before he arrives in town, it gets great publicity while he is in town, and it does not exist when he leaves. Mr Beanland is an able lieutenant of Mr Santoro, who represents the seat of Clayfield. The people of Clayfield, Hamilton heights, and Albion heights all look upon Mr Santoro as their greatest danger. They refuse to go out at night, unless they bear with them a large, silver cross and carry a revolver stuffed with silver bullets. They call him the "vampire" of Hamilton heights. They are deadly afraid to move out of their houses. I would suggest that they are going to relay this message to him at the next election.

I turn now to the matter in north Queensland. Mr Doug Slack, the member for Burnett——

Mr Budd: "Indiana" Slack.

Mr NUNN: I take the interjection: "Indiana" Slack and the Temple of Doom. Mr Slack, of course, is also known around the ridges since his latest foray as "St Vincent de Paul" Slack. Anybody who saw *Four Corners* last night would realise why. I realised; I recognised the old clothes that I had taken to St Vincent de Paul. He went to St Vincent de Paul to get some old clothes and sandshoes. But do members think he would get a pair for the poor, old temporary ranger? No, he had to go barefooted while they were romping around the north. I wonder who paid Mr Slack's expenses.

It comes as no surprise to us that he would be doing this sort of thing. His constituents—and I share some of the facilities in Mr Slack's electorate—do not see him. They write letters to him asking to see him, but they do not see him. He must be somewhere. I suppose being in north Queensland surveying the beauties of Cape Melville National Park and the foxtail palms is as good a place as any for him to be. There are some coincidences attached to the trip to the north, which I will address at a later date.

However, I will come back to the amalgamation and the effect that it has had on the Labor Party. It has stricken terror into the hearts of the Labor people. It has really crushed Labor people and sent us to our knees.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah) (11.20 a.m.): This morning, the Opposition Leader has exposed some of the many implausibilities in the Government's claim that both of the Premier's two most senior personal staff were required by Mr Goss to travel to Cooktown in November last year to plan a trip to Starcke station that never, ever happened. One of the most significant of the issues on which the Opposition Leader touched was the disturbing body of evidence that there may well have been a bid to pervert the course of justice as a result of a phone call made by the Premier's media adviser, Mr Dennis Atkins, to the ALP card-carrying head of the Environment and Heritage Department, Dr Craig Emerson, on behalf of the brother of Mr Atkins' colleague the Premier's then private secretary, David Barbagallo.

In answer to a question in this place, the Environment Minister indicated that the content of the Atkins phone call to Emerson was merely to seek—

> ". . . advice about the use of private vehicles in national parks, which the director-general was unable to assist with."

That is an answer so minimalist and so nonsensical that it could serve only to heighten suspicion. In response to another question, the Minister went on to indicate that Dr Emerson subsequently telephoned the Regional Director, Far Northern, to "seek a briefing" quite clearly—despite the revealing coyness of the Minister's response—on the seizure of Paul Barbagallo's four-wheel drive in Cape Melville. During that conversation, the director-general is said to have directed that any resulting police investigation should proceed without departmental interference. I sincerely hope that

that is precisely what occurred and that that is all that occurred, but one of the major reasons the Opposition today signalled that it will formally approach the Criminal Justice Commission to extend the terms of reference for its current inquiry into this matter and to make its hearings public concerns the disturbing and substantial body of evidence that there may well have been a bid to pervert the course of justice in relation to that seizure, stretching from the Premier's office through Dr Emerson to the northern regional director of his department, Mr Greg Wellard, to ranger Pat Shears, who made the seizure, and police officers.

As usual, the Government's bid to deal with this evidentiary aspect of the Cape Melville affair is studded with contradictions, implausibilities and plain nonsense. Parts of the evidence are not much more than innuendo from public servants whose statements are clearly attempts at blowing the whistle on a Government by people who know, from the bitter experience of their colleagues, that this Government's rhetoric about genuine accountability is a sham. This is just another one of "Salome" Goss' tantalising, would-be-if-he-could-be titillating veils. They all fall off automatically at half past six every night. The Premier is a hypocrite and a fraud. We know, just as everybody else knows, precisely what happens to public servants under his Government who do not toe the line. They get the chop—just like ranger Pat Shears got the chop at Cape Melville when he dared to knock over one of the Premier's little mates. Even Gavin Ricketts, the Fauna Squad man who stood up, along with Peter Harris and Pat Shears, to be counted on the side of genuine accountability in this matter, had his campaign for the ALP in the Brisbane City Council election abandoned by the machine because the Premier and his machine were displeased that he was an honest cop.

Just look at it: Dennis phones Emerson; Emerson phones Wellard, and the heat is on Shears, the Cooktown police and, I suspect, Ricketts. If the heat was on Ricketts in the council election—and it was—then there is a good chance it was on him in the field as well, which is about as hypocritical as it gets from this Government. That is the scenario the Government has to deal with, and I will bet London to a brick that it will try to make Wellard the sacrifice, because he is the one that it shoved into the firing line.

For instance, according to the *Hansard* of 18 February, Wellard was very quickly expressing concern over the professional actions of a ranger, but as usual it all gets mixed up and the Government trips over itself. On 18 February, the Environment Minister said—

> "The regional director has advised me that the ranger did not follow normal regional policy and report all events to his immediate supervisor at the earliest possible time."

So Wellard's concerns are also the Minister's concerns. However, on 25 February, the Minister changed her mind. By then, she was declaring that the ranger went through all appropriate procedures. I would like to think that was something other than a slip-up under pressure, but I very much doubt it. Again on 18 February, there was another bid from Wellard to nobble Shears. On that date, this statement was made—

> "The regional director was concerned that the ranger did not have the delegated authority to confiscate the vehicle."

That one was somewhat novel, and it amazed us——

A Government member: Did he?

Mr LAMING: To answer the interjection, the delegated authority was tabled in this House recording Shears' appointment as long ago as October 1992 to the rank of field officer under the signature of the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. Apparently, that went unnoticed for over a year.

Shears' authority in this matter was also very clear to his departmental district manager, Peter Harris, who said in a briefing for the regional director on the incident on 15 November—which has also been tabled in this House—that Shears had the authority to seize via section 15 (1) (g) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Since Harris had been deeply involved in the entire foxtail palm policing effort from the departmental side and there had been numerous previous seizures, this is an aspect of the business that would have exercised his mind. Detective Sergeant Ricketts, well experienced in seizures because of his work in the area in the seed season of 1992, also clearly thought that Shears' action was lawful, because he proceeded to lay charges based on the seizure. Notwithstanding this, efforts that are open to the strong suspicion that they amounted to bids to overturn Shears' work in this particular case continued.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mr Wellard would have had access from October 1992 to the fact that the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service had appointed ranger Pat Shears a field officer, in November 1993 Mr Wellard became so concerned about the viability of that appointment that Crown law advice was sought. Crown law advice has also been sought on whether Shears had the authority to confiscate the vehicle. Again, given that Shears had been sent into the area to curtail the foxtail palm seed racket not in the company of police

but in the company of two unarmed Aboriginal men, one would have reasonably expected Wellard to have considered what he was both asking and expecting of ranger Shears. Obviously, it would be nice to think that this belated decision to decide the status and authorities of his staff was sought to be meticulous and educational. Clearly, it is also open to another interpretation.

The Opposition further finds it highly suspicious that Shears was not re-employed by the Department of Environment and Heritage after the Barbagallo incident, despite strong recommendations from both Ricketts and Harris that he be retained. In his interim incident report of 15 November, Harris said—

> "Rather than receiving censure for any unorthodox approach adopted in carrying out their unusual duties in such an extraordinary situation, it is my firm opinion that rangers Pat Shears, Tony Flinders and George Monaghan deserve a high level of commendation and an expression of departmental gratitude for their noteworthy achievements. It is also recommended that their excellent work, in which they have begun to reverse the longstanding and serious threat to the natural integrity of this park, should be sanctioned to continue—but with increased support from both within this department and with firm commitments for assistance as needed from appropriate law enforcement agencies such as police and customs services."

Detective Sergeant Ricketts, who served with Shears in the 1992 season, was also a referee. He said—

> "Any decision not to re-employ ranger Shears after the expiry of current arrangements is not to be taken too hastily as the DEH is short of personnel keen to become involved in the more unpleasant activities and duties under relevant statutes."

Despite those recommendations, after eight years of regular employment, and despite the key fact that the seed season was in full swing, Shears was not re-employed by the department at the end of his contract. Last night on *Four Corners*, Shears said that the reason given to him for the fact that he was not re-employed was a lack of money. Given the Government's much-trumpeted increase in spending for the Department of Environment and Heritage and its allegedly deep and great commitment to the environment, that is yet another implausibility that simply increases our suspicion that Shears is the victim of a witch-hunt.

The obvious concern is that Shears was not re-employed for the same reason as Labor Party headquarters gave Ricketts the cold shoulder as a Labor candidate in the Brisbane City Council election: he displeased his masters by doing his job and going after alleged wrongdoing, even though the alleged wrongdoer had friends in high places in the Goss Government. The whole thing stinks to high heaven. We need a widened inquiry and we need a public inquiry.

Horn Island Goldmine

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (11.30 a.m.): Last week, evidence was given at a Criminal Justice Commission inquiry about concern over the environmental practices at some Queensland mines. While it is not my intention to comment on the CJC inquiry generally, nor to canvass the general issue of mining and the environment, I do believe that a number of issues in relation to the former goldmine on Horn Island in my electorate need to be clarified.

On a number of occasions over the last century, goldmining has been undertaken on Horn Island. In fact, it was 100 years ago—in 1894—that gold was first discovered on Horn Island. There were intermittent mining activities in the late 1890s, the early 1900s, and some in the 1950s and 1960s, most of which were of short duration because of the paucity of gold reserves and the fact that it was uneconomical to extract the gold by whatever technology was appropriate at the time.

Mining operations commenced again in November 1987 and the first gold was poured in July 1988. I ask honourable members in the House to note those particular dates—November 1987 and July 1988—because approval for those mining operations was clearly given under the previous Government and was the responsibility of the previous National Party Government.

The Goss Government was elected on 2 December 1989, and barely three weeks later, on Christmas Eve of 1989, workers at the Horn Island goldmine were advised that operations were to cease forthwith. Owing to financial problems with the parent company, Giant Resources, Ernst and Young were appointed to act as receivers for Augold NL and Torres Strait Gold Pty Ltd. In effect, the entire working life of this operation was under the control of the previous National Party Government.

It is history now that representatives of the traditional owners, the Muralag Tribal Corporation and residents and ratepayers from Horn Island

had, by and large, been strongly opposed to the granting of the mining lease on Horn Island.

I pause briefly to mention a friend of mine, the late Ted Totman, who had been a long-time resident of Horn Island and who was so moved and disgusted by the actions of the former National Party Government in granting the mining leases on Horn Island that he left his home there and shifted to Herberton on the Atherton Tableland. Ted passed away last year. He was a very good friend of mine and of my predecessor, Bob Scott.

Significant local objections were overridden by the then National Party Government and a lease was granted to mine gold on Horn Island. Among the principals of the companies granted the lease were Mike Evans and Denis Reinhart—two names which will be well known to members of this House.

Very early in my term as the member for Cook, I visited Horn Island and was given a tour of the remnants of the mining operation by a representative of the receivers and concerned citizens from Horn Island. This was an interesting little exercise because a representative of the receivers told me that they were trying to sell the Horn Island goldmine as a going concern. I queried him on that. I asked, "Why has this got into trouble?" He said, "There is not enough gold." I said, "You are telling me that you are trying to sell it as a goldmine, but there was not enough gold and that is why it is in trouble." I thought that was a novel approach to take.

I immediately gained an appreciation of the concern of the residents about the condition in which the mine had been left and I undertook to make urgent representation to the then Minister for Resource Industries, Ken Vaughan, to present an argument that the Government should take urgent steps to undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the site. The then Minister instructed Ernst and Young to undertake full rehabilitation of the site. He indicated that failure to do so would result in forfeiture of the bond and in all plant and machinery being claimed by the Crown and later auctioned to raise funds for the rehabilitation of the site. Shortly afterwards, Ken Vaughan visited the site in company with officials from the Department of Resource Industries and me to make a personal assessment of the need for rehabilitation.

The security deposit of $500,000 which had been required at the commencement of the lease was withheld and auctions of mine assets in May 1991 and February 1992 raised a further $600,000. This State Government then made a commitment to the people of Horn Island, the people of the Torres Strait, and, I might add, the people of Queensland generally, that it would undertake a full rehabilitation of the site. I thank Ken Vaughan for his diligence in that matter at the time.

A rehabilitation strategy was developed in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Mineral Resources Act, the Water Resources Act and the Contaminated Land Act. The new environmental policy of the Department of Minerals and Energy which was launched in 1991 provided further principles for the rehabilitation strategy. These included—

(1) Mining and rehabilitation should aim to create a land form with land use capability and/or suitability similar to that prior to disturbance, unless other beneficial land uses are predetermined and agreed.

(2) Mine wastes and disturbed land should be rehabilitated to a condition where the maintenance requirements are consistent with an agreed post mining land use.

(3) Surface and ground waters that leave the leased area should not be degraded to a significant extent.

Consultation was also held with the Department of Environment and Heritage, the traditional owners, the Torres Shire Council, the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, the Island Coordinating Council and the Horn Island Ratepayers and Residents' Association to ensure maximum local input. An initial environmental audit of the site was undertaken by the Department of Minerals and Energy to identify key potential environmental issues which would need to be addressed during the decommissioning of the site.

To research and quantify these issues, a comprehensive site monitoring program was initiated in 1991. Environmental consultants AGC-Woodward Clyde were contracted to establish the monitoring sites. This included the installation of seven shallow ground-water bores, 22 surface water sites, six sediment sampling sites, two V-notch weirs with data loggers and a weather station. To complement land-based monitoring, funding was provided to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to extend the Torres Strait Base Line Study to include discharge points from the Horn Island mine site.

Based on the outcomes of site monitoring and the diverse nature of environmental issues on the site, the old mine site was segregated into 10 discreet domains and a unique rehabilitation strategy was developed for each domain. These domains included the plant site, the sulphide

tailings dam, the process water dam, the mine pits, the waste rock dumps, and various other aspects of the former mining operation.

During the rehabilitation process some flexibility was required to ensure that the defined rehabilitation strategies were adapted to detailed monitoring results as they became available. Full rehabilitation of the mine site, camp site and exploration areas has only recently been completed.

The Queensland Government has spent a total of $2.2m rehabilitating the site, which figure incorporates the security deposit and mine auction proceeds, but nevertheless represents a significant investment by the taxpayers in cleaning up what the Government perceived as an unacceptable environmental risk.

What needs to be stressed, and stressed again, is that there is a marked difference between the attitude of previous Governments to issues of mining and the environment and the policies and practices of this Government. This Government has set about establishing the highest standards of environmental safety in relation to Queensland's mining industry and it has instituted a system whereby bonds for mining leases more accurately reflect the likely rehabilitation costs should the Queensland Government be required to step in, as was the case with the defunct Horn Island site. This Government has also strongly encouraged and worked with the mining industry to ensure that environmental standards and rehabilitation are met progressively throughout the life of mining operations and are not left to be cleaned up after the miners have walked off the site, as was the case in Horn Island.

Mining is an extractive industry and some disturbance of land forms and waterways is an inevitable consequence. However, it is incumbent on the industry to meet acceptable standards of control, monitoring and rehabilitation. It is the Government's responsibility to supervise these standards and ensure that appropriate action is taken wherever problems may be detected. This is not a responsibility which the previous Government was prepared to accept. In fact, it openly flouted its obligations, and those matters need to be drawn to public attention.

The Horn Island goldmine is a good example of where this Government differs from the previous Government and is living up to the expectations of the people of Queensland in relation to the impact of mining on the environment. The Government has undertaken a comprehensive rehabilitation of the site and sediment and biota have been sampled offshore of the mine for comparison with the control site to the south east of Horn Island. Water monitoring in the area is set to continue and we are committed to biannual vegetation monitoring, which is due to commence in the next few weeks.

I personally have had numerous meetings and discussions with representatives of the Horn Island community and have had correspondence, particularly with the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, about the concerns of the traditional owners. A meeting of interested parties was held on Horn Island on 2 December and 3 December 1993 and a further meeting is planned next month to discuss progress and the ongoing monitoring strategy.

I recognise that there will always be a residual concern in the minds of the residents of Horn Island and neighbouring areas about the potential for some future environmental impact from the old goldmine on Horn Island. That is a legacy of the environmental practices of previous Governments with which Queenslanders generally and the residents of Horn Island will long have to bear. However, I am proud of the efforts of this Government to rehabilitate the site. I commend the present Minister and his predecessor for taking seriously the concerns I have expressed about the Horn Island goldmine and attending to the comprehensive rehabilitation of the site.

Time expired.

Mr D. Barbagallo; Mr D. Atkins

Mr SLACK (Burnett) (11.40 a.m.): This morning, members have seen a pathetic attempt by Government members to belittle Opposition members for doing their job in relation to what took place in the Cooktown Police Station in regard to a ranger who had seized a vehicle in a national park. That ranger had a card that entitled him to do that. In this House, the Minister said quite clearly that the ranger acted appropriately in that particular situation. But what have Opposition members seen from this Government? Nothing but condemnation for what we have done in respect to this issue.

Members of the Opposition have asked the CJC to inquire into this matter. Why should we not ask the CJC to do that? It is part of our responsibility as an Opposition to do that. Where does this Government think it is going? It is going straight downhill with its attitude on this issue by trying to joke it off and denigrate the people involved. This Government is also trying to denigrate the press. This morning, the Premier gave a classic example of a person who——

Mr Borbidge: Didn't have the answers.

Mr SLACK: As the Leader of the Opposition quite correctly says, the Premier did not have the answers. The more he says, the more Opposition members wonder what he has to hide. Why did he not table the travel arrangements this morning in the House? Why was David Barbagallo given all that responsibility? The Premier claimed that he allowed those people to go up there, including his personal secretary. I would have thought that, when the Parliament is sitting, it would be desirable for the Premier to have his chief media officer at his side.

If it is true that the Premier authorised those travel arrangements—and I am not taking the Premier's word for it—why did he allow it? The Parliament was sitting the week before and immediately after that weekend. It was just before the Mabo legislation was to be debated in the House. The Premier expects us to believe as plausible that he allowed those people to go up there to consider a claimed proposed visit by himself to the Starcke property. How many hours were involved in that travel? Did the Premier ring the owner of that property? No! That was left to David Barbagallo, who is supposed to be a trained secretary—a precise person who knows what he is doing. I would have thought that the Premier would not admit to having a donkey as his secretary, that he would have as his secretary a person whom he could expect to do the job properly. Surely protocol would have demanded that the owner of that property be contacted and advised that the Premier intended to visit it.

Opposition members are expected to believe that those people went to Cairns and had prearranged a meeting in Cooktown with David Barbagallo's brother, Paul Barbagallo, who was to act as a guide to take them from Cooktown through the Starcke property so that they could plan the visit for the Premier.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: You don't believe that?

Mr SLACK: No, I do not, because my commonsense asks me to question that. I suppose that there is a remote chance that that was possible, but I cannot find any evidence that makes it possible. I ask members to listen to what the Government is expecting us to believe. Paul Barbagallo, the brother of the Premier's secretary, David Barbagallo, is a canefarmer who lives at Innisfail. The Government expects us to believe that he was going to drive from Innisfail to Cairns and then from Cairns to Cooktown. It is 85 kilometres from Innisfail to Cairns. It takes four and a half hours to drive from Cairns to Cooktown. A couple of days before that meeting was to take place, Paul Barbagallo drove to Cape Melville National Park supposedly to take some photographs of the site at which that vehicle was seized. Incidentally, that vehicle contained an SKS rifle. He drove to Cape Melville National Park—a 15-hour drive over horrendous roads, even in the dry season.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: That's on your thinking.

Mr SLACK: The honourable member does not believe it would take 15 hours. At best it would take 12 hours. The road is built through sandhills. If the member disputes that, he obviously does not know what that area is like. The Government expects members to believe that Paul Barbagallo was going to drive up to Cape Melville National Park to take photographs during the worst time of the year to drive there. It is also expecting us to believe that he was going to drive 15 hours back to Cooktown to meet up with David Barbagallo and Dennis Atkins and then repeat the journey straight away. If the Premier's personal secretary had to organise that sort of thing, one would have thought that he would fly to Cairns and be met by a representative from the Department of Environment and Heritage, who would then take him north in a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

What is Paul Barbagallo supposed to know about the Starcke property and guiding David Barbagallo and Dennis Atkins through that property? As I said, Paul Barbagallo is a canefarmer from Innisfail. The southern end of the Starcke property is at least seven hours' drive from Innisfail. That is equivalent to almost halfway from here to the western Queensland border. Having him as a guide would be like asking me to know all about that border country and be a guide. How could Paul Barbagallo be expected to be a guide for David Barbagallo and Dennis Atkins?

During that sitting of the Parliament, would it not have been a simple matter to ring the Cooktown Shire Council—as I did—and ask what would be involved, how long it would take and whether it would be a suitable time for the Premier to visit? The Cooktown Shire Council was not contacted about this. David Barbagallo was supposed to be an A1 secretary to the Premier. The Premier claims that he was very sorry and sad to see him leave in circumstances that were coincidental with what may have happened in that area. As the Leader of the Opposition correctly said, we cannot draw conclusions from this as such, but we must ask questions because it just does not make sense to us.

Mr T. B. Sullivan interjected.

Mr SLACK: I ask the member to listen to this, because what I am saying is true. That ranger seized a vehicle in a national park. I was there. I saw where the vehicle was hidden. It was hidden in trees in the national park. It had driven past warning signs. There were guns,

photographs and a bit of dope in that vehicle. The ranger seized that vehicle. The Aboriginal people in that area were scared because shots had been fired in the national park. The keys were in that car, and it had full petrol tanks.

The Minister has said that the ranger acted appropriately. He drove to Kalpowar, the nearest place from there, rang the Cooktown Police Station and gave details to an officer there. He then drove to Lakefield National Park and was told to report to the Cooktown Police Station on Saturday. When he got to the Cooktown Police Station, what was he confronted with? He was not questioned by a policeman. He was confronted by an unknown person who questioned him very aggressively about his seizure of that vehicle. He wondered what it was all about. He thought, "I have done my job. I should be praised, but I am the one being questioned. I am in trouble. What have I done wrong?" There was not a big fine involved. All it involved was illegal rifles, chainsaws and a little bit of dope in a national park. It was not a major issue. But what happened? That ranger was being grilled by a person who was unknown to him at that time. That person turned out to be the Premier's secretary and the brother of the person whose vehicle was seized. Fair go! Surely one should have a suspicious mind when one considers all those circumstances. Is the Government trying to have us believe that all those circumstances indicate that, in all probability, it was all an innocent exercise? Why does the Government think that the Opposition has been asking for a public inquiry?

This issue now goes much deeper. This morning in the House, the Minister tried to justify these actions and announced that all those raids were conducted by some task force for which Shears was supposed to be acting. When I asked him about whether he was acting as a surveillance officer, Shears stated that he knew nothing about that. Why is the public asking why he was not re-employed? Sure, he had three-monthly contracts, but he had every reason to believe that he would be re-employed, because that incident occurred just prior to the peak season when illegal activity takes place in that national park. Yet, in the middle of doing the job that he was employed to do, his contract was not renewed. In 1992, the Minister said publicly that she would appoint more rangers to clean up the crooks in the national parks. But what have we seen from that day on? Nobody in that national park is a ranger.

Time expired.

Urban Planning; South-east Queensland

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (11.50 a.m.): A person visiting Brisbane for the first time or watching the local television news or reading the *Courier-Mail* would be forgiven for thinking that south-east Queensland consisted of an inner-city area and a sprawling, growing network of satellite cities. The rapid growth rates of Logan and other outlying areas as well as the inner-city suburbs attract a disproportionate amount of attention from the local media and community spokespeople. This has created a bias which is trickling down to the rest of the community.

The problem lies in the fact that the overwhelming majority of local citizens do not belong to either of these groups. Most people live in south-east Queensland and reside in suburbs such as those in the electorate of Mansfield. The lack of immediately obvious problems in these areas would appear, to most of us, to be a distinct advantage. However, these suburbs—the backbone of Brisbane—are often being neglected for this very reason. If not neglected, they are certainly taken for granted in the decision making. The perception which appears to be held by the media and many opinion leaders within the community is that these areas have few problems; limited resources are best spent on more serious problems and spent elsewhere.

An example of this was when the Federal member for Fadden highlighted funding going to a sporting group in his electorate. He made the comment that the average salary was $33,000 and, therefore, people did not need the funding. He forgot to analyse that, in fact, it met the criteria for a growth area, it has a substantial ethnic mix, and it is subject to enormous amounts of change. If he was in his electorate very often and looked around, he would note that the southern bypass, the freeway and the Gateway Arterial all carry enormous amounts of traffic.

To reinforce my argument, I shall first consider the importance of planning for the future. It is topical that I do so because the SEQ 2001 report is now being finalised. I will look at the effect of change of several elements upon a typical suburb; and, finally, how long-time residents of the established, forgotten suburbs must be considered in discussions to resolve any problems they have with planned changes.

One of the greatest challenges that confronts us, the representatives of the people of this State, as we head towards the twenty-first century, is the planning of the future development for south-east Queensland. The working group for the transport policy paper for the SEQ 2001 project has estimated that the number of person trips in south-east Queensland will rise to over 10 million per day by

the year 2011. This far outstrips even the predicted population growth of the area. This will be especially true in the suburban areas of Brisbane where increased levels of affluence and car ownership will further push up the number of private car trips.

This is only one issue that must be analysed in detail with respect to the forgotten suburbs in between the inner city and the more outlying, dispersed areas. It is important that these people be considered because, at the end of the day, it is through their suburb that people travel—along roads such as Newnham Road, Logan Road, Cavendish Road and Creek Road, to access the freeway, the Gateway and the city. It also must be remembered that roads such as Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road carry a huge volume of all types of traffic on them every day. Such areas are used as thoroughfares for passengers as well as goods and services delivery within the electorate. However, they also carry an enormous amount of traffic passing through to the port, to the Acacia Ridge rail head, to the industrial estates, or to outlying suburbs.

No-one would argue that planning for the future in terms of the development of areas around Brisbane is essential. It is vitally important to ensure that the south-east Queensland of the next century is one that people will want to live in. But in our rush to plan for future growth, we must not forget the people! Community concerns must be listened to—the concerns of all members of the community, not just the ones on the agenda of the media. They must be given more than lip-service. It is these people who live between the central business district and the burgeoning regions surrounding it who must be listened to.

Many different elements contribute to the look, the feel, the liveability of a suburb. It is the interaction of many individual elements that must be the focus of all efforts. The changing of one aspect of a suburb, such as the width of a street, will have a far greater impact than merely facilitating through traffic. The whole character of this suburb is changed. Although the outlying areas beyond may be better served, the people who live along this route will also have to live with the effects of any alteration. A simple thing such as parking outside one's residence or accessing one's home becomes a challenge. People on Newnham Road can attest to this.

The displacement or movement of one element may totally change the existing harmony which residents feel there is in the suburb. The placement of speed bumps in back streets in an attempt to decrease speeding is an example of this. Too often all that we have done is shift the problem from one street to another. We have set resident against resident and we have upset shopkeepers.

The historical framework of a suburb must also be recognised and appreciated by those attempting to redesign the area. That is why our community works hard to maintain and re-establish the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds. The provision of such essential features as adequate green space, for example, in the form of recreational areas and parks, must be maintained.

Many of the residents of suburban Brisbane have lived in their present homes for a considerable period. They have an established lifestyle—a lifestyle often greatly affected when new development, from housing to transport, is implemented with little or no consideration for their needs. Many of them purchased their homes when the areas were the outlying suburbs. Now they are the meat in the sandwich. Now they feel their needs are being ignored. Now they feel their requirements are placed far down the list, that they have been deprioritised as a group, that the new residents, the commercial developers, the new agencies, and the authorities are more powerful.

I have been questioned on numerous occasions by concerned residents in my electorate on these issues. This feeling of weakness that exists must be replaced by empowerment—an ability to voice their concern; a strength to stand alone and not be manipulated by other agendas. However, the only way to achieve a satisfactory result for both new and existing residents of a suburb is through discussion and through compromise. All involved must be willing to accept the merits of the others' argument. They must accept that some change is inevitable.

The essential element is balance—a balance of traffic controls, a balance of residents, a balance of housing. To achieve the desired result for all concerned, attention must be focused on providing more than one type of housing in a given suburb. Large blocks must be blended with smaller ones; townhouses blended with flats; public housing with private homes. This mixture of architecture need not be a problem. With some forethought and planning on the part of developers, it is possible to produce a desirable outcome for all. Such an outcome would, by necessity, take into account the implications for the local environment from both an aesthetic and topographical perspective. In this respect, the Department of Housing is to be congratulated on its response to this challenge.

The rush to provide extra services for outlying areas must be tempered by

remembering the needs of those living closer to the CBD. In building highways, and providing housing and infrastructure for some, we must not forget the rest. Helping one group should not disadvantage others. While planning a better future for a new area, we must not inadvertently plan the demise of established suburbs. We must balance the development in our region with the need to maintain the traditional lifestyle that the people of south-east Queensland have always enjoyed.

The trend in some areas to smaller blocks built right up to the main road is symptomatic of the many pitfalls—the many pitfalls for planners and Government authorities who do not take into consideration the needs and requirements of the suburban residents of Brisbane. This must focus not only on the end users but also the people living in the suburbs, who have the development impacting on their lifestyles. These people will see the entire character of these suburbs changed. The advantage of this development may be obvious; however, the key is in avoiding or, at least, minimising the drawbacks for those affected. Each interest group, each street, each family, each individual person, deserves the right to have a say in the changes happening in their place of residence. Their concerns must be listened to, understood and seriously considered when making decisions that affect them. In this sense, we must not give with one hand and take away with the other. We must not only listen; we must really hear!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for the Matters of Public Interest debate has now expired.

WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 September 1993 (see p. 4441).

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest) (12 noon): Although the Opposition has no substantial objection to the majority of the amendments contained in the Bill, it does have specific questions and concerns about certain details. In saying that, the Opposition, for reasons that I will outline, still believes that, fundamentally, the actual Act of 1990 needs a rewrite.

I hope that the Labor Party has abandoned forever any notion that firearms should be prohibited entirely and that decent law-abiding people should not have legitimate access to them. I am aware that a considerable body of opinion in the Labor Party seeks to impose that blanket ban, and it would be irresponsible if the Government bowed to that. If the Government has a policy based on the general philosophy that only fit and proper people should have legal access to weapons, then the Opposition has no objection to that. Its concerns are how best to ensure that policy is implemented.

Mr Beattie: It's called wishful thinking.

Mr COOPER: No doubt, it had to be the honourable member. I would recognise that voice anywhere. The Opposition's concerns relate to how best to ensure that that policy is implemented so that we have the best possible system in place. It must be admitted that no system will be perfect and that there will be deeply saddening circumstances when people are threatened, wounded and even killed with legally obtained guns. The challenge for us as legislators is to ensure that the chances of these circumstances arising are as minimal as humanly possible. Therefore, it is very regrettable that the Government has not acted to adopt the Opposition's proposal, which it called the prohibited persons register.

The Opposition believes that one very serious and fundamental flaw in this legislation is the requirement placed upon police weapons licensing officers to determine, in effect, the mental state of all applicants and thus decide whether or not each applicant is a fit and proper person. That is an awesome responsibility and an intolerable burden for them. However experienced and however wise a police officer might be, he or she simply does not have the training to make some sort of snap psychiatric evaluation of each and every applicant. All of us have our own non-professional criteria for determining whom we personally regard as unstable. Everyday, I contemplate the state of those members who sit on the Government benches—even the member for Brisbane Central— and I wonder about the definition of "fit and proper person".

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr COOPER: I knew that there was something in my speech for the member.

Police officers do not have the resources, training or the knowledge to decide arbitrarily in a moment who should and who should not have access to a gun. Although I believe that the Police Service is the appropriate agency for the issue of licences, I believe that police officers need every possible assistance so that they can make as informed a decision as possible. It is a matter of regret and concern for the whole community that the Government, in formulating these amendments, did not seek to provide that assistance.

It would have been timely and appropriate for the Government, in this amending legislation, to introduce the prohibited persons register. I appreciate that the Bill provides new provisions

which, hopefully, will ensure that police can consider past and present orders made against a person both in Queensland and interstate. I also hope that a fail-safe mechanism is in place to ensure an accurate and speedy transfer of the details of such orders from all court jurisdictions. I ask the Minister to provide the necessary details and assurances on that matter in his reply. For example, one matter that requires clarification is the proposal to require an authorised officer to consider whether a person is subject to an order under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act. That Act requires that a person will have his or her weapons licence cancelled when an order is made against him or her. However, I am unsure exactly when this cancellation takes place. Is it from the time the order is served, or when it is formally issued by the court? There could well be a time lapse between those events and that could prove potentially dangerous. We are all concerned about domestic violence and the risks it poses to women and children. Therefore, this legislation, which seeks to complement changes to the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act, needs to be precise.

Before I outline some details of the Opposition's proposal for the introduction of a prohibited persons register, I would like to make some general comment about the Act itself and what I believe the Government saw as its motivating force in introducing it on 1 January 1992. Basically, the Government sought to regiment gun owners into a permit-based or licence-based register. Demonstrably, that attempt has been a dismal failure and the basic thrust of the Act has not been achieved. In roughly rounded figures, 250 000 licences have been issued, yet there are an estimated one million gun owners in Queensland. Even if the Government contests that estimate, it cannot by any stretch of the imagination claim that the majority of gun owners have complied with the provisions of the Act. Therefore, the only valid and logical conclusion is that the Act has been a monumental failure. It is largely ignored, widely abused and generally treated as a bit of a joke.

The failure of the Act was highlighted in a special article by Ken Blanch in the *Sunday Mail* on 24 October last year. It was titled, "Flood of guns has wild west town afraid", and gave some chilling revelations about the total breakdown of law and order in Aurukun Shire. As we know, there has been a total breakdown of law and order in many centres and towns throughout the State. Sergeant Jim Rankine of the Aurukun police admitted that young people whose firearms were confiscated had no trouble getting replacements. Naturally, this led to the suspicion there was an illegal supply of them. Police Inspector Gary Hartland of the Cairns district stated—

> "I can only describe the proliferation of firearms at Aurukun as a matter of great concern. Firearms now seem to appear as soon as a fight begins."

The article reported that high-powered, military-style weapons, including Chinese-made SKS and SKK assault rifles, were available. Obviously, the Act means nothing in the Aurukun Shire or in many other parts of the State that are sliding into anarchy fuelled by illicit alcohol and illegal guns. Although this is undoubtedly an extreme example of total failure, it nevertheless makes a complete mockery of the so-called gun control legislation.

Responsible, law-abiding citizens who have sought and obtained appropriate licences are not the people whom weapon control legislation should be, to use an apt term, aimed at. Clearly, hundreds of thousands of guns exist in the community in the possession of unlicensed people, and this underlines the failure of this Government and its legislation.

The Labor Party has always had a rather naive belief in the assumption that enrolling, by whatever means, law-abiding people into a register will provide some sort of guarantee that all, including the minority who will not abide by the law, will abide by the appropriate law. Of course, that is plainly nonsense. Although having some sort of register of weapon permit holders might be useful—that is, if it works—it will do nothing but provide information for some sort of sociological research and for revenue raising. It is like compiling a list of licensed drivers who have never had a Traffic Act conviction or an accident.

It is notable that the Government seems to be either incapable of, or unwilling to do anything about, addressing the problem of hundreds of thousands of guns held by unlicensed people. This demonstrates the futility of trying to legislate for total control. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the proposal for a prohibited persons register would provide police with a solid database of the names of persons who should not be issued with a licence. Of course, the Act provides for avenues of appeal against a refusal for a licence, and that is only proper. If a person had an objection to being included on this register, he or she would be entitled to ask for a review of the decision. The Opposition's proposed register would contain names of persons who, for various specified reasons, on prima facie evidence are judged to be not fit and proper persons to have gun licences. Those reasons would include, for example, criminal histories, orders against them under the

Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act and intelligence gathered by any law-enforcement agency that would lead a police officer to hold a reasonable belief that a particular person was not fit and proper to hold such a licence.

The current legislation requires police officers to determine, in effect, the mental state of an applicant. As I have said, that is an awesome responsibility and an intolerable burden. I am advised that the diagnosis of mental illness is both difficult and, in many ways, subjective. If highly trained and experienced psychiatrists can disagree about a person's mental state, as they often do, then it is obvious that untrained police officers are swimming in dangerous waters if they are trying to do the same thing. Recently, I have corresponded with the Queensland branch of the Australian Medical Association, outlining the prohibited persons register proposal. My letters have been long and detailed. I have met with members of the AMA, and I intend to continue to discuss the matter with them. Quite obviously, the AMA has concerns about patient/doctor confidentiality ethics, and I understand that. However, fundamentally, I am asking the AMA to respond positively to a proposal that medical practitioners could or should notify the officer responsible for the proposed prohibited persons register of any patients who, in their considered professional opinion, should not be allowed a gun licence. As I have said, my correspondence with the AMA acknowledges that this proposal might be seen as striking at the very heart of the confidentiality of the doctor/patient relationship and, therefore, might be rejected for ethical reasons. However, I have pointed out also that there are other considerations, such as a responsibility to the wider community.

I appreciate that it would be a very real professional and ethical dilemma for a doctor treating a person judged to be suffering from a mental illness rendering him or her unfit to have a weapon to decide whether or not authorities should be notified, particularly if that patient indicates a desire to obtain a gun. My correspondence with the AMA could have been mirrored also in letters to and from the Law Society and the Bar Association, inasmuch as lawyers are also the repositories of many of their clients' secrets. If a client told his or her lawyer that the wrong verdict in that client's case could provoke him or her to gun down the judge, jury, prosecutor and witnesses, would it be a breach of the lawyer/client relationship if the lawyer notified the authorities? The same dilemma faces any number of professional people, including members of the clergy, who are recipients of very confidential personal secrets. The issue of personal privacy versus the common good needs wide ranging community debate.

Although I am very mindful of the need to respect privacy and the professional/client relationship, my personal view is that the common good argument should prevail. If a doctor, lawyer, member of the clergy, or any other person in a professional/client relationship did become aware that a client could commit violence, it would be small comfort to them—and no comfort to anybody else—if that professional stayed quiet for ethical reasons and the disturbed person went on a murderous rampage. The Government has a clear moral duty to instigate such a debate, and it would be shirking its responsibilities if it just pushed it aside and into the too-hard basket. In the context of considering the proposed prohibited persons register, I invite the Minister to respond to this call for a community debate.

It is sad but true that our society and its pressures seem to be breeding dangerously unstable people who might appear on the surface to be perfectly sane. I am sure that the police officer who, only a short time ago, granted a licence to the man who was admitted to and then absconded from a mental institution, and who then took people hostage in a Brisbane lawyer's office, judged that man to be sane and, therefore, "fit and proper" under this legislation. That case grimly underlines the sorry failure of this Act and highlights the unfair burden placed on police officers in its administration and enforcement.

In my opening remarks, I indicated that the Opposition has no philosophical objections to these proposed amendments. However, I believe that they are in many ways fiddling at the edges. However worth while these amendments are in their intent, they are amendments to an Act that obviously has been a sad and sorry failure. The proof is plain when we compare the number of licences with the number of gun owners.

I have some misgivings also about the Minister's assertion that there has been proper consultation with affected community and special interest groups. This was corrected to some extent, but only after we drew attention to the fact that quite a number of the groups had not had extensive consultation, contrary to what we had been told. I believe this consultation has now occurred, as it should have.

Certainly, the Queensland Security Association Incorporated believes it has been shabbily treated. It was literally in the middle of discussions with the Police Service about these proposed amendments when, without warning, the Minister introduced the Bill. I invite the Minister to explain why such a major organisation

was treated in this way. Given this experience, I can only wonder about the general extent of the alleged consultation process.

The deficiencies in the proposed amendments to the Act have become apparent. They concern directly the security industry in this State, which seems to have the most complaints about this legislation. The security industry in Queensland is well over twice the size of the Queensland Police Service. Currently, the industry is undergoing rapid expansion in response to commercial demand. It is expected to gradually increase its scope of operational duties. Such a rapidly expanding organisation involved in the protection of persons and property throughout Queensland requires recognition of its concerns and needs in regard to the legislative controls and requirements to be imposed upon the industry.

I believe there is no person or body more informed of the operational requirements of the security industry than the security industry itself. It seems that the concerns of the industry's representative organisation have been largely ignored and, in some instances, even scorned. The replacement of Part 3, Division 7 of the Weapons Act 1990, which relates to security guards and organisations, requires further in-depth examination, as many of the proposed amendments are not acceptable to the security industry. They leave open many irregularities, and are not conducive to the efficient and effective operation of the security industry in Queensland.

Furthermore, it has become apparent that there are many technical irregularities in the proposed amendments concerning the security industry. These concerns are of the utmost importance to the industry. Many fundamentals are not being correctly addressed by the amendment Bill. In relation to the security industry, there are many grey areas in the Weapons Act itself and in the proposed amendments to the Act. I fear that the real depth of the problems confronting the security industry has been largely underestimated, including essential elements such as the attention being given to authorised training persons, training for security guards, course material to be used, and so on. These points of concern require much further attention. I suggest that the channels of communication between the Police Service and the security industry should be further expanded to gauge an accurate assessment of the feasibility of proposed legislation. It seems that this has not occurred over this piece of important legislation, which is most relevant to the security industry itself.

In the context of an effective weapons control policy, I invite the Government to consider a review of current penalties for stealing guns. The Act deals with selling guns, but other legislation imposes penalties for theft. It seems to me that there should be tougher penalties for the theft of firearms, because of the likelihood that this illegal act would be the forerunner of an even more serious and life-threatening act. Obviously, a person who steals a weapon is much more dangerous than someone who steals a video recorder. I believe a comprehensive and fully integrated weapons policy would have tough penalties for specific offences of gun theft. The Minister might care to comment on that suggestion.

Before I conclude, I wish to make a few remarks about what I see in the Weapons Regulations 1991 as discrimination against small security firms. The former Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act of 1979, which was repealed when this legislation came into effect in January 1992, did not provide for a separate licence for security organisations. Under that Act, a licence was required for each concealable firearm possessed or acquired by a person or organisation. These licences cost $65.10 at the time when the Act was repealed, and they were issued for a two-year period.

Under this Act, a security organisation's weapons licence covers an unlimited number of firearms. It costs $1,000, and is issued for a five-year period. Each security guard employed must have a licence, costing $40 for a five-year period, to use any weapon licensed to his or her employing company. I wrote to the Minister about this and said that small security firms regarded this as severe discrimination. One has only to consider the position of, say, a single or two-member company and do the sums to realise that the fee is a substantial imposition on them. The introduction of the $1,000 fee may be intended to rid the security industry of its smaller operators. This would effectively prevent free enterprise through discouraging small business growth in this industry.

Under the previous Act, a licence fee for two weapons for a small security firm would be about $330 for five years, allowing for inflation since January last year. Now it is a mandatory $1,000, irrespective of how many guns the company has. In a letter to me on 6 October last year, the Minister admitted—

> "Whilst it is agreed that there is some impact on small security organisations, it is not considered feasible to invoke a scale of fees for this type of licence."

He continued—

> "There are a number of parameters that would have to be taken in consideration, especially where the cut-off point should be in respect of the number of weapons that can be held on any one licence."

In other words, the Minister is admitting that, because the Government and its vast empire of advisers and public servants find the simple matter of treating a special category of small business with justice, equity and plain commonsense too difficult to even contemplate, nothing will be done—too bad and tough luck. That really gives us all cause to believe that other difficult issues will be treated in the same way.

Also in that letter, the Minister gave a justification for this flat fee; namely, the fact that small security companies, after paying the $1,000 licence fee, could increase their arsenal at will and to any extent. He wrote—

> "It has been pointed out by the authorised officer, whilst there is no inference as to the manner that your informant is conducting his business, the natural increase in this type of work throughout Queensland would require the employment of additional guards eventually."

The Minister—who likes to assure us night and day that there is no crime wave and that, if there is a crime ripple, the police have it all under control—is saying in his letter that private security companies employing armed guards have a golden future of constant expansion. It is really a case of two bob each way.

The requirement for shooters, especially pistol shooters, to sign in in a range use register book has led to a host of security problems for shooters. Many break and enter offences committed on individual shooters' premises have been attributed directly to the information that is required to be supplied by the shooter in the range register book. Clearly, there is a need for a complete review of the regulatory requirements of the range use register, as it seems to be serving the purpose only of supplying accurate information to weapons thieves.

I wish to table a copy of correspondence from a victim of a break and enter in which three pistols were stolen. I recommend the suggested use of supplying only the shooter's pistol club identification in the range use register book and the wearing of photo identification whilst on the range. The problem of premises being broken and entered is endemic to a number of shooters, both those who reside in this State and overseas.

Recently, I was contacted by a particular person who was the victim of such an incident. I asked that person to outline the incident and to offer some suggestions with a view to the resolution of this problem. That person has done so. He commenced his letter with these words—

> "Also for your consideration are some observations that might make Queensland both a safer and a more efficient place with respect to firearms.
>
> Details leading up to the theft of the firearms are as follows:
>
> In December 1993, I imported the firearms from the United States obtaining all of the required shooters permits, concealable firearms licence, importation permits and ancillary paperwork. Upon receipt of the firearms in mid-December 1993, I had already joined the Gold Coast Pistol Club and began to shoot competitively at the club at that time. About eight weeks later on or about 1 February, 1994 a wallet of my wife's was taken from my vehicle at the gun club. This may or may not be related to the subsequent breakin. Our home was broken into on 20 February, 1994. The three firearms I had registered and shot at the Pistol Club were taken at that time. Two of them were found easily, one took a good bit of searching. The Police have of course been investigating the theft. They've attempted to take finger prints from the windows and the doors, but apparently the burglar was professional enough to wear gloves. Subsequent to the breakin we upgraded our security system and we had yet another attempted breakin on the morning of March 9th. The burglar alarms frightened away the thief at that time.

With that summary of the incidents leading up to and subsequent to the theft of the weapons, there are a few things that might be of use in dealing with firearms thieves in Queensland. First of all, there is a current requirement for all people who shoot at a pistol club to sign in in a register book at the club. The form now requires the name, the shooters licence number and the firearms that the individual will shoot on that particular day. It used to require the address as well, but that requirement has been dropped by the police. Such a list serves as a shopping list for a potential thief. In the case of thefts that are going on at the Gold Coast Pistol Club (I'm number 8 to be burgled), I'm not sure if it is a thief walking in off the street and seeing the weapons listed and then reporting to one of his underworld figures who then goes out and steals the weapons or whether it is actually somebody involved in the Pistol Club with precise information about the member who has

> passed that information along. Information should be available to the police but on a more confidential basis at the club. My recommendation would be that instead of listing names and weapons on the form, that the shooters provide the Police and some pistol club officers with a list of weapons and when registering use only their pistol club I. D. number. During the course of shooting at the Pistol Club, all of the members are required to wear their identification which displays both their picture and I. D. number. I believe this is good to continue in the future because then people can be questioned if they don't appear to belong. It is easy to walk up and ask a stranger who they are and where is their Club identification."

The letter continued—

> "With respect to the Police investigation of the theft, I have found nothing but courteous and thorough investigators from . . . the first officer to be at the scene, to the finger print specialist . . ."

The person who wrote that letter has no complaints at all about the police. However, that person is highlighting the fact that the system needs to be corrected and improved. I table a copy of that letter. Again, I urge the Minister to implore his advisers to concentrate their talents and energies on a more equitable system.

I will be dealing with matters of detail at the Committee stage. At this stage, I conclude by saying that I believe that this legislation has failed in its overall purpose and that the Government has refused to take this opportunity to ensure a major rewrite of the legislation, which could correct some of these serious deficiencies. In the future, it is our intention to be very thorough in relation to the Weapons Act. However, we recognise that certain measures need to be taken. We intend to discuss certain clauses in detail at the Committee stage.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes) (12.27 p.m.): I rise to support the Weapons Amendment Bill. I would like to provide the context in which this Bill is being debated. In the community, there is concern about crime and the nature of crime. There is a degree of confusion in the community about the true crime picture, and that confusion is not being eased by members opposite. They have made a profession of spreading misinformation and contributing to the fear, alarm and ignorance in our community. That is no surprise, for those are the principles upon which conservative Governments of the past have been built.

I argue that the principal change that has occurred with respect to crime is very much qualitative rather than quantitative. We have seen a very marked shift in the types of targets that are subject to the attention of the criminal element. As I understand it, that phenomenon is referred to by the police as a shift from the hard targets to the soft targets. Over the past four or five years, during my time as a member of this Parliament, I have witnessed that phenomenon. In my electorate, whereas institutions such as banks and building societies were once targeted, now offenders are concentrating their efforts on small corner stores. In one case in my electorate, handbags were stolen at gunpoint from some of my constituents who were attending a ladies' indoor bowls night. In the past, such an incident would not have occurred. I believe that the shift from hard targets to soft targets is a direct consequence of the security measures now being adopted by banks and building societies. Because of tighter security, those institutions are no longer the subject of hold-ups.

Nowadays, the major banks have either in situ, see-through screens or—as is the case in branches of the Commonwealth Bank— screens which are mechanically activated and which shoot up in front of the teller as soon as there is an emergency. At the smaller financial institutions—for example, in my electorate around Coorparoo—security officers are permanently stationed outside the premises. As a result of those measures, such institutions are now much more difficult for the criminal element to target. Indeed, it has resulted in a real shift to attacks on people within the community. People in the community are hearing the anecdotal evidence of others in their own streets and suburbs who are the victims of very disgusting crimes. They find these crimes disgusting because the victims are people in their own streets and local environments. People who have just withdrawn money from a Redi-teller are now targeted simply because it is no longer profitable for the criminals to go inside the bank to steal money. Local communities see this as a real concern, and it is a concern that can be addressed by this Queensland legislation. This concern brings the individual citizen very much into stark confrontation with the law, the criminal element and the prospect of violence, particularly armed hold-ups and being the victim of some form of forced behaviour, for example, being forced to hand over money.

Today, more than ever, as members of this Legislature, we have a great responsibility to ensure that the citizens of this State are protected by laws against the criminal element who would wish to see citizens violated and intimidated in their own local environments. However, we need to settle upon a good

balance in our legislation to ensure that all citizens are protected. Members would recall that back in August 1990 it was this Government that brought gun control legislation several light years ahead by way of major reforms to the weapons legislation in this State. That was, indeed, a very sound series of reforms which have been found to be palatable by the people who regularly use firearms, for example, primary producers and those who have legitimate excuses for using weapons. That legislation has worked and it is in force today as a balanced piece of legislation. However, the Opposition spokesman is still hankering for the good old days when there was no such sound legislation in Queensland, where people who were fanatical about gun ownership and free gun use roamed the streets without any decent constraint upon them.

In today's debate, it should be remembered just how the Opposition behaved back in August 1990 when this legislation was debated. I think history will record that debate as the after-dinner mint debate. Members would recall that despite all the rantings and ravings and fanatical behaviour by the Opposition members at the time, they did not even turn up after the dinner adjournment to continue the debate. They were too busy consuming their after-dinner mints. That was an indictment upon them which they will bear for the time they remain in this place. It simply showed the hypocrisy of the members at the time who professed to represent the redneck, ratbag elements out there, but who did not have the capacity to carry through their arguments. However, the result was a balanced and decent piece of legislation. The Bill that is before the Parliament today contains amendments which essentially carry further the principal thrust of that legislation.

In supporting this Bill, I would like to canvass two amendments in particular. Firstly, the definition of a firearm will specifically cover firearms that are temporarily inoperable or incomplete. Currently, in its widest interpretation, the firearm definition can include spear guns, bows, crossbows, powerheads, explosive power tools and captive bolt humane killers. My recollection of working in meatworks in the north is that they are very effective devices and safe devices for killing cattle, but they could certainly be used to injure a person. Given its widest interpretation, it could be argued that a carpenter who uses a nail gun would need a firearms licence. The amendment will specifically exclude these things from the firearms section of the Act.

Under the Act, by definition, "firearms" are also "weapons". By removing the abovementioned things from the firearms definition, it could also be argued that they are no longer weapons by definition, either. To overcome the situation in which one of these things may be used as a weapon to commit an offence, there are extended definitions in specific sections to include them as a weapon. For example, in the case of a person discharging a weapon on private land without the owner's consent, the definition of "weapons" will include spear guns, longbows and crossbows. Spear guns, longbows and crossbows and replicas will be regarded as weapons in the case of conduct that may be offensive in public, for example, causing fear.

Other provisions, including extended definitions, will be included in sections on dangerous conduct with weapons prohibited generally and possession or use of weapons under the influence of liquor or a prohibited drug. An example of how the extended definition may come into operation is if people in the Brisbane City Mall were attacked by someone with a nail gun. If that person inflicted injuries on shoppers by discharging nails at them and causing bodily harm to them, the offender would not only be charged with offences under the Criminal Code but would also be liable for offences under the Weapons Act itself.

Another very important aspect which impacts upon the individual member of the community is the possible unlawful use of collectors' weapons. That has its own sphere of regulation, and provisions contained in this amending legislation specifically address the issue of deactivation of collectors' weapons. Currently, under section 3.30 of the Act, a licensed collector who has lawful possession of a weapon has to have the weapon rendered incapable of operation by a prescribed person. Unfortunately, the deactivation of some pistols renders them inoperable and valueless. In other cases, deactivation has caused weapons that were of historical significance to be welded up and basically ruined. Standards for collectors and collectors' premises and storage facilities are also regulated under the Act. Amendments will now allow certain weapons that are deemed to be antique firearms to be excluded from the deactivation provisions of the Act by the authorised officer. This will ensure that antique firearms remain collectable and maintain their historical value.

Antique firearms are defined under the Act to include: (a) a firearm designed for muzzle loading or for firing by flint; (b) a firearm in respect of which ammunition is not commercially available and has been approved by an authorised officer as being an antique firearm; and (c) any other firearm of a type or class approved by an authorised officer as being an antique firearm. Under category (c), the authorised officer may deem certain firearms, for example, the Model

1896 Broom Handle Mausers from the Boer War or the Light Patt 1908 from the Great War as antique firearms. However, provisions will not extend to Schedule 1 weapons, which are restricted under the Act and are considered too dangerous to keep other than in a deactivated condition.

As an example of how the provisions will work—if a collector possesses valuable duelling pistols, application is made to the authorised officer—the commissioner—to have the weapon deemed an antique firearm. Upon approval, it is automatically exempted from the deactivation provisions.

I am very proud that the party to which I belong and the Government that is in power in Queensland have a very different policy in relation to gun control from that of members opposite. It is now apparent that, during the 32 years of National Party rule in Queensland, those members were captives of the pro-gun lobby. In Queensland, we could put in place laws that are far more restrictive. However, they would be very impractical to use and would certainly run counter to many practices that are practical and fundamental to areas such as primary production.

Mr FitzGerald: You've solved all the gun problems, have you?

Mr FENLON: We have come a long way towards solving the gun problem in this State. We have provided balanced laws in this State that do provide a degree of restriction.

Mr FitzGerald: Really, what's your record?

Mr FENLON: The gun laws in this State provide a very sound foundation to ensure that the rednecks in the State are not running rampant in the streets and are not allowed to pick up a gun at short notice.

Mr FitzGerald: What do the statistics show?

Mr FENLON: I shall remind members opposite what was achieved by that legislation. One of the most important elements of that legislation, which we had the courage to bring in and those opposite did not, was ensuring that there was a cooling-off period for gun ownership in this State so that people could not leave a domestic argument or some other argument in a fit of temper and run off to buy a gun to shoot somebody. That was an achievement. We had the courage to bring in that sort of law which is in place today. I am very proud to be part of bringing that law into place. I argue very strongly that that law has been constructive in saving lives in this State, and I implore its operation.

The State of Queensland has a very balanced set of weapons laws, and these particular amendments go a long way towards ensuring that balance is maintained and that specific anomalies and shortcomings of that law are rectified. I commend the Minister and his officers for their very good work in bringing this Bill before the House.

Mr PERRETT (Barambah) (12.45 p.m.): It must be said that this legislation provides more than a little relief among shooters in my electorate. For the time being, the Minister is concentrating on sensible change to legislation introduced by one of his Labor predecessors. That legislation was unnecessarily restrictive. It was typical of what law-abiding firearms owners have come to expect from the Labor Party. Labor saw it as a start on its agenda to disarm the law-abiding population. Of course, it can only be the law-abiding population which can be disarmed. The criminals in our society will not submit themselves to licensing and registration, and they will not hand over the weapons they already have or which they will get in the future. Sporting shooters and those of us such as farmers who use firearms legitimately at work have no doubt that Labor's agenda has not changed. The Labor Party still wants to put on more and more restrictions.

This debate comes hard on the heels of the publication of a recent edition of that excellent publication, the *Australian Shooters Journal*. Publications such as that journal, the *Sporting Shooter* and *Guns Australia*, provide a sensible alternative point of view to the hysteria we find in the material sent out by all the Labor front groups. I congratulate that journal on publishing material prepared by the Institute of Legislative Action. That is a self-help body set up by shooters to ensure that its voice is heard by politicians and others seeking to unreasonably control the ownership of firearms. The column prepared by Mr Ted Drane for the October edition of the journal contains a very simple analysis of why Labor politicians seek to put unreasonable restrictions on law-abiding firearms owners. I want to put part of what he said on the record.

Mr Beattie: Tell us about the gun you've got. What gun have you got?

Mr PERRETT: I suggest that some of the anti-gun crowd on the other side of the House should listen to this. That applies to Mr Beattie. Those members might recognise their own attitudes. Mr Drane said—

> "It seems that the more unfortunate news that there is for democratic governments, the more desperate are the politicians running them to be thought of as effective; at the moment, throughout the western world the level of social unrest is rising, unemployment will not go away,

> urban poverty is being seen to increase, and people's cynicism about not only the effectiveness but even the morality of Governments is widely expressed. Certainly this is so in Australia. And so there are many politicians who keenly want to be seen to be doing something, so their electorates will return them to power and they will retain their livelihoods."

Mr Drane has hit it right on the head there. It applies especially in Queensland. One might even think that Mr Drane was talking especially about Queensland and the Goss Labor Government. He continued in this way—

> "In this modern age, kissing babies doesn't work. When they set out to deliver the goods, they have to do it by grandiose gestures."

Mr Drane talked about "scapegoating" by powerbrokers trying to establish their own positions. But then he got to the real nub. He said—

> "What a godsend gunowners are to politicians. They can be blamed for all sorts of evils. They can be castigated as a group on television because of the misdeeds of a very tiny few of their number, and up until the present, because they came from so many different parts of society, they haven't been seen to represent a threat to those who attack them, because they haven't been organised together in a group."

The good news is that firearm owners are no longer as vulnerable as they were. In the past few years, they have finally got the message that they have to be unified if they are to beat the Labor Party and the front groups wanting to disarm them.

I am pleased to be able to report that shooting clubs are growing in strength all the time. They are taking more of an interest in what Governments and lobby groups are saying about them and planning to inflict on them. Shooters and leaders such as Ted Drane have seen the need for a coordinated approach to getting the message across—for taking the fight up to Labor and the lobby groups it has infiltrated.

The Institute of Legislative Action shows all the signs of being a successful and professional advocate for commonsense in the firearms debate. It will be a real force to prevent Labor getting away with draconian measures by the old tactic of divide and conquer. Before I finish my remarks on the institute, I will quote a passage from the November report. In a discussion of the methods used by politicians attempting to disarm the population, the ILA report says—

> "In a true democracy such as Switzerland, Citizen Referendum controls government excesses and it is not only bad laws that can be cancelled. Under that system, even whole ratbag governments can be dismissed."

I could not agree more. I have been long been an advocate of citizen-initiated referendums. In the case of firearms laws, I believe there would be a real case for citizens to get together on a sensible set of measures and gather the support necessary to force even a Labor Government to hold a referendum on the issue. Of course, firearms laws are not the only suitable subject for referendums. I believe that many of the important basic issues in our society can be decided in this way.

There is no cause for shooters to be complacent. A recent meeting of the Police Minister's Council came very close to agreeing to national registration of firearms.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Do you object to that?

Mr PERRETT: The honourable member should just listen. As a recent article in a reputable journal put it, the mere existence of such a register would have brought the Federal Government much more into the area of direct control of firearms and their use—something it does not have the at the moment.

Mr Beattie: I knew we were going to get something about Fabians!

Mr PERRETT: No self-respecting person would be happy with Paul Keating fooling around with the firearms laws. Nobody would trust the man. With his attacks on the Constitution and our flag, he has already shown himself to be completely out of touch with the community. For the sake of a couple of votes he would be just as likely to try a total ban on firearms and use the national register as a collection list.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr PERRETT: Mr Beattie has been driving that Fabian-red Saab too much lately. It is certainly no good the Minister looking smug about this. The proposal for a national register was defeated principally by the New South Wales and Tasmanian Police Ministers. If Queensland had its way—if the Queensland Labor Government had its way—there would be a national register and harsh new restrictions. Firearms laws would be set the way our food quality laws are now set. Under Labor's mutual recognition legislation, food quality laws now amount to the simple concept of the worst State standard applying to rest of Australia. Under the Labor plan, firearms laws would go the same way. The State with the most draconian restrictions would set the pace.

The shadow Minister talked about a proposal for a prohibited persons register. I support his comments. There are people in the community who are clearly unfit to have control of a weapon of any kind. The shooting fraternity has no use for people of the kind the member for Crows Nest has in mind, and neither do we. They give the law-abiding, vast majority of shooters a bad name and they pose a danger to the rest of society. Remember that guns—weapons—do not kill people, it is people who kill people.

Mr Nuttall: That is an old one.

Mr PERRETT: But it is a true one. Honourable members opposite can refute it all they want.

Mr Fenlon: Tell that to all the dead children in American schools today.

Mr PERRETT: But who pulled the trigger? It was a person. The firearm does not do it on its own. People kill people and that is the fact. The people who are clearly unsuitable to possess a weapon of any kind should be entered on a register and should be denied access to a weapon if at all possible. That register of prohibited persons should be a cooperative venture between all States and should include those people with a criminal history, a history of violence or mental instability—believe me, there are a few of them in this place—and those who are subject to domestic violence orders. They should be denied licences wherever licences apply. The register should be available for access by licensed firearms dealers and others who deal in all sorts of weapons. I have no doubt at all that legitimate dealers in these items would be more than willing to consult such a register if it was readily available.

Mr Beattie: Thank goodness there was a pause. We were getting overwhelmed.

Mr PERRETT: There is more to come, that is the bad news. If the honourable member listens intently, he might learn something. There are certainly problems with the accurate compilation of that register of prohibited persons. The member for Crows Nest has canvassed them fully. Nevertheless, the problems could be overcome and should be overcome. If the Government was prepared to implement such a scheme and impose effective penalties for the misuse of firearms, it could then do away with licensing requirements. Those licences clearly do not work. All they do is tie up police on needless bureaucratic tasks and impose inconvenience and cost on the only people who comply with the current rules—the law-abiding firearms owners of this State.

Instead of its fetish with firearms, Labor would be better off giving a real commitment to restoring proper levels of law and order in our society. It would be better off ensuring that police had the numbers and resources to catch criminals. Having caught them, it should provide for realistic penalties and a prison system capable of making offenders serve their sentences. Under the penny pinching and social engineering of the current Labor Government, we are losing badly in the fight against the criminal elements in our society.

Offences against the person have risen from under 6 000 per 100 000 of population in 1989 to over 7 000 now. In the same period, offences against property have risen from about 5 000 to over 7 000. The real criminals are growing in number every day. Under Labor policies, our society is losing the fight. Serious assault is rising at the rate of 12 per cent each year. Sexual offences, including rape, are increasing at an annual rate of 9 per cent. Rape and attempted rape are showing an alarming rate of increase of 15 per cent. Queenslanders are no longer safe at home or anywhere else, and it is not hard to see why. Growth in police numbers is not keeping up with the population growth. Budget restrictions are so tight that police can rarely be paid for the overtime that they work and few can be rostered to work at night or at weekends. Police morale also suffers from the leniency of the court system and the absolute incompetence of the prison system. There is a constant stream of escapees and police have to go out and catch the offender all over again.

The police annual report threw an interesting sidelight on Labor's mad ravings about firearms. The report shows the weapon most used by offenders is a knife. Offenders used a knife in 46 per cent of murders and attempted murders. Any good socialist will say that the hand gun should be outlawed forever, but only 1 per cent of murders and attempted murders were committed with hand guns. Rifles were used in 12 per cent of cases, and shotguns in 6 per cent of cases.

A Government member interjected.

Mr PERRETT: I ask honourable members: next time Labor needs a good emotive issue, can we expect a campaign to ban knives from our society?

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (2.30 p.m.): Prior to the luncheon adjournment, we were debating the Weapons Amendment Bill. It was interesting to note some of the comments made earlier in the debate. Prior to my reincarnation as a union official with the Electrical Trades Union, I spent 15 years working in the banking industry. During that 15-year period, I was heavily involved with the then Bank Employees Union. We

lobbied the then Government of the day fairly hard for tighter gun control laws, simply to protect our members and employees within the industry. In all the time that we attempted to lobby the then National Party Government for tighter gun control laws, we were unsuccessful. I believe that that was a consequence of the fact that the Government of the day was really a captive of the gun lobby and that it was frightened to make the tough decisions to ensure that guns were brought under some control. In fact, prior to 1989, it was recognised widely that the State of Queensland had the worst gun control laws in the nation.

In 1990, this Government took the step of introducing legislation to regulate the use of firearms. That, in itself, was a great move. This amending legislation removes any bugs that were contained in that legislation, and it helps to reinforce the gun control laws in this State. It is frightening to think that prior to the introduction of that legislation, people could actually walk into an A mart store or a K mart store and buy a gun. People could purchase a rifle from a teenage shop attendant, take that rifle out of the store, get ammunition and create havoc in society. I am pleased to say that that is certainly no longer the case.

In Victoria and New South Wales, the gun laws had been tightened. The financial institutions in those States started to erect bullet-proof barriers in their premises, which made it difficult for criminals to rob them. As it became more and more difficult for the criminal element of our society to rob banks, building societies and credit unions in those States, they moved to Queensland. Consequently, Queensland became a free-for-all for them. It was up to the Bank Employees Union, the Police Service and the financial institutions to say, "Look, we cannot let this go on. We have to do something about it." So the bullet-resistant barriers were erected in the premises of financial institutions in this State.

Financial institutions have now gone a step further. I think most of us would know that, these days, a guard stands out the front of a building society, a credit union or a bank. The need for this has certainly been brought home to me. During the last six months, in my electorate of Sandgate, the Commonwealth Bank, which is located about 200 yards from my office, has been held up. The credit union, which is located about 100 metres from my office, has been held up. That was too close to home for my liking. Those premises now have guards stationed out in front of them.

Today, it is more difficult for people to obtain weapons so that they can rob those sorts of places. I think we need to-——

Mr FitzGerald: You'd be joking.

Mr NUTTALL: It is far more difficult to buy a gun today than it used to be.

Mr FitzGerald: They steal guns, those crooks.

Mr NUTTALL: They didn't have to steal them. They could just walk into an A mart store and buy one from a pimply faced shop attendant. Under the member's Government—the previous National Party Government—people could buy guns easily; it was a free-for-all. That was the problem. We lobbied the member's Government and said, "Give us some protection." The member's Government gave no protection at all to any employee, or to any member of the community, for that matter, because people were able to buy guns and create havoc. I am pleased to say——

Mr FitzGerald: It's all stopped, has it?

Mr NUTTALL: No, and it will never stop. However, it is certainly far more difficult for people to create havoc in society now than it was in the past.

Mr Ardill: And it's reduced bank robberies.

Mr NUTTALL: I will take that interjection, and I thank the honourable member for it. It is that much tougher today. These days, a person who is sitting at home and thinking, "I am short of dough. I will go and rob a bank", cannot just go and get a rifle.

Mr FitzGerald: They would put it on bankcard, would they?

Mr NUTTALL: Maybe they would have.

This legislation contains two amendments that I wish to address. One of those relates to primary production and farms. Currently, in certain circumstances, members of the family of a farmer who holds a gun licence, and maybe any of his employees, are able to use firearms in the course of their jobs on the property. They can use those firearms under the authority of the licensed person who owns the property. Unfortunately, sometimes those provisions were construed as meaning that the weapons could be used only on the land upon which the person who held the licence lived. Sometimes people own properties interstate as well as in various parts of this State. The amendments contained in this legislation will make it quite clear that people will be allowed to use firearms on those various properties. If an employee of a licence holder is working on a property in Queensland and has a need to use a firearm, that employee can do that. That same employee can also use that weapon on the licence holder's property down south or further up north without having to

go through the rigmarole of the owner handing over the gun to that employee on that property.

The provisions in the Act also referred only to the use of the weapon and not the physical possession of the weapon. That meant that any advantage to the licence holder was taken away. Basically, those guns were probably used on those properties to destroy vermin or, unfortunately, stock. The person in possession of the weapon was covered only for the immediate use, for example destroying animals. The provisions contained in this amending legislation will allow the person not only to use the weapon but also to be in possession of the weapon whilst travelling to and from whatever job that person may be doing. However, there will be some restrictions. That person must have the express consent of the licensee, or the person who owns the property. In addition, that person must use the gun in connection with carrying out his or her duties on that property.

Another advantage in this legislation is that it recognises some of the economic hardships that are faced by property owners. It will relieve the economic burden of requiring all employees to obtain licences. Obviously, many of these properties are vast distances away from police stations, at which people have to apply for licences.

I will now refer to theatrical ordnance supplies. At the moment, the legislation states that organisations or companies supplying weapons to theatre, film and movie productions must ensure that any weapons are properly used and recovered afterwards. Also, they must ensure that the weapons are used only in the productions for which they were supplied. The use of the weapons has to be supervised on site, which causes problems for the owners of such businesses, who might have contracts, for example, on the Sunshine Coast and on the Gold Coast. Obviously, it is difficult for owners to supervise the use of the weapons in such instances.

The amendments that we are proposing today will make it easier for owners, because employees will now be able to be a part of the supervisory process. For example, if an owner of a business is somewhere down the coast, an employee can now go up the coast to supervise a contract. As I said earlier, the amendments being put before the House today strengthen the Weapons Bill 1990. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick) (2.42 p.m.): In rising to participate in this debate today, I would like to support a couple of the proposed amendments in the Weapons Bill. Firstly, I would like to comment on some of the statements made in this place about our so-called scant regard for life and property and our inability to come to grips with the gun laws issue when we were in Government.

When bringing in gun laws, members opposite should be very careful not to delude themselves that they will be able to stop criminals from acquiring firearms. In other places that have had very strict gun laws over past decades, many of the firearms related crimes were committed with illegal firearms. A lot of firearms are stolen and bought in pubs. In the past, a number of people have said to me that anybody who wants a pistol can pick one up in a pub on a Friday night. I am sure that the Minister has heard those types of suggestions.

Human nature is such that there will always be problems when knives, firearms, clubs and so on are at hand. Also, members should bear in mind that most assaults and murders in this country are knife related. Firearms come third after knife-related assaults and bashings in terms of assaults or murder. In saying that, I am not condoning abuses of firearms. I am not saying that we should not consider the need for change at times. I question the need for the gun law legislation that we saw introduced in this State in the early 1990s. However, if we are to have weapons legislation in this State, we might as well have practical, workable legislation. By and large, the amendments that will be passed in this Parliament at a later hour today will improve the weapons legislation that came into this Parliament at an earlier time.

I have been disappointed with the time taken for this amendment Bill to reach this point. I have expressed my concern to the Minister in the past. A lot of people in the general community have been waiting for the passage of these amendments.

My electorate covers much of near inland southern Queensland and borders the southern ranges and I have encountered problems in relation to reciprocal rights. For example, people from New South Wales have had to acquire a visitors permit in order to come into Queensland to shoot. This legislation will enable people who hold a recognised licence in New South Wales to shoot in this State. That is of particular interest to competition shooters. It is also of interest to primary producers who may live in New South Wales and who also have a property in Queensland, which necessitates their travelling across the border. This has led to problems in the past, which this legislation will address. This amendment is long overdue.

I made the Minister aware of another of my concerns earlier today. He might like to mention it in his reply. A person who lives in northern New

South Wales, which borders my electorate, might come into Toowoomba, Warwick or Stanthorpe to shop. One of those places may be a person's nearest major town. Such a person views areas of Queensland near the border as home territory and Brisbane as his capital city. If such a person crossed the border, even if he were a legitimate licence holder in New South Wales, and purchased a rifle or a gun in Queensland, he could not take that gun home; it would have to be posted by registered post at a later time. I am not sure what the logic behind this is. Maybe there is a concern about the motives of that person. I put it to the Minister that a legitimate licence holder in, say, New South Wales should be able to take a rifle home after purchase. Let us take the case of a legitimate licence holder or a primary producer whose rifle has worn out and is not shooting accurately any more. That person may wish to come to town to buy a rifle in order to destroy vermin or stock. I would be very interested to hear the Minister's comments about that example. If there is a problem in that regard, I would like to see the Minister and his department move at some time in the future to amend the law. It is causing great inconvenience for people. In the past, the department has indicated that this is a real problem. Last year, I spoke to somebody in the firearms licensing game, and I suggested that there was a problem. I asked whether this problem would be addressed in the Weapons Amendment Bill. He suggested that it might not be. He said that he could think of a couple of other ways around this problem. Certainly, he did not suggest any legal way around that problem. It is an issue which can be easily and sensibly overcome.

Also, I would like to commend the amendment in the Bill which seeks, as the honourable member for Sandgate alluded to earlier today, to allow an employee, a family member, or a near associate of a land-holder to be able to use a firearm on an adjoining property or a property that is many miles away. This is something that we will see increasing in the future as primary producers seek to protect themselves against unfair seasons by having, for example, one property in New South Wales and another in central Queensland, or in a better climate. We need that flexibility, which is built into the legislation by this Bill. That will be an extremely good amendment to the current legislation.

I will make this the shortest speech of my political career. I welcome those particular aspects of the Bill. They will make the legislation better. Once again, I am not saying that I believe that we have any great need for gun laws. But if we do have gun laws, we might as well have gun laws that work and are practical.

Mr McELLIGOTT (Thuringowa) (2.49 p.m.): My very brief contribution to the debate will concentrate on two aspects of the Bill.

Mr Livingstone: This will be the shortest speech of your political career, too.

Mr McELLIGOTT: It will probably be one of the shortest speeches of my political career; that is true. The first point relates to the playing of the game of Skirmish or, as it is known these days, paint ball sport. I do not know how other members feel, but personally I hold some grave doubts about the playing of Skirmish. It seems to me to be abhorrent that grown people would aim a weapon of any description at another human being and fire a projectile of any type in the direction of that other human being. However, it is part and parcel of the recreational and business activities of this State. As I will indicate, it does come within the scope of this legislation.

As I said, paint ball sport, which was formerly known as Skirmish, is a combat simulation game. It is a little bit like question time in this Parliament. It involves the use of gas-powered paint pellet guns to shoot participants as a simulation of a gunshot. Again, the similarity with question time is obvious. The simulation of gunshots that comes from the other side of the Chamber bears little resemblance to the real thing. I am told that the activity is growing in popularity and therefore it contributes to the tourist industry. The guns used in paint ball sports are within the definition of "firearm" in the Weapons Act 1990 and are therefore subject to the licensing provisions of the Act.

Operators of paint ball sports fall within the definition of a dealer and accordingly require a dealer's licence. The dealer's licence does not comfortably fit the unique position of paint ball field operators, as they are generally small, part-time businesses which do not deal in any firearms other than paint ball guns. They do not comply with the strict and expensive storage and security requirements of a normal dealer. Presently, operators of paint ball fields must apply for an exemption under the Act to operate paint ball fields. The process of exempting paint ball operators is not a satisfactory arrangement, as I am sure members would agree. The Weapons Amendment Bill, which we are debating this afternoon, has solved that problem by including paint ball sports within the shooting gallery provisions of the Act. The Weapons Amendment Bill, by recognising paint ball sports, will give operators a legal basis to continue their activities. That course of action—as opposed to the alternative course, I suppose, of banning paint ball sports—will allow the industry to contribute to the tourist industry. Regulating the

industry will allow economic advantages while providing adequate controls, which I am sure all members support.

The second matter that I wish to discuss is the special licensing arrangements that will allow for reciprocal arrangements on interstate licences. During his brief contribution, the member for Warwick referred to that matter. This was instigated as a result of the Australian Police Ministers' Council resolutions and will be of great benefit to organisations such as the sporting shooters. For about 10 years now, I have had the honour and the privilege to be patron of the Townsville branch of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. Although I have never owned a gun and I certainly hope that I will never feel the need to protect myself with a weapon of that sort, I nevertheless have genuine admiration for sporting shooters—the skill and the dedication that they have to their sport and the time and effort that they put into the pursuit of their particular sporting activities.

The implications of this amendment are spelt out in a letter that I received about a month ago from one of our members who, as I will detail to the House in a moment, travels each year to the Australian championships. It outlines the sorts of difficulties that that particular sporting shooter has encountered. His letter states—

> "At Easter this year I will be attending a national shoot . . . held by the South Australian Branch of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. My wife and I plan to travel to Adelaide by car and intend to return through the Northern Territory and do some sightseeing. A week is the longest we plan to be in that State.
>
> This national shoot and holiday combination is becoming an annual event with us, the shoot being held on a rotational State by State system. Last year it was held in Victoria.
>
> A stumbling block, a great inconvenience more than anything, is obtaining temporary permits from some States or only to carry a rifle in a car as in the case of the Territory.
>
> My concern is why isn't my Queensland Shooter's Licence recognised throughout Australia and why do members have to prearrange permits."

The reply that that fellow received from the Northern Territory police when he sought approval to simply carry his sporting weapon through that State—with no intention of using it, I hasten to add—included these details—

> "Visitors arriving in the Territory must obtain a temporary permit within three (3) days upon entry into the Territory. Application for a permit is made by attending at any Police Station in the Territory and personally completing an application as well as a firearm safety examination. The firearm safety examination must be passed eight out of ten questions to allow you to discharge or carry firearms in the Northern Territory."

The letter continued—

> "A visitor with pistols must at the time of making application for a temporary permit, produce a letter of authority from their pistol club. The letter should state that the member is an active and financial member of that club. The letter must be attached to the application together with a copy of his current Interstate Pistol Licence and firearm registration. The applicant must comply with the visiting club's by-laws.
>
> Fee for a temporary permit is $10-00, and can only be obtained for three months from the date of issue.
>
> All firearms must be produced for inspection at the time you make application for the permit. This allows for registration and firearm inspection. There is no fee for firearm registration and inspection."

Although I am sure that all members would be concerned about adequate safety procedures relating to the use of firearms, nevertheless, in this situation, the person is attending a national championships and on his way back to Queensland is seeking to do some sightseeing in the Northern Territory. Currently, he is faced with all of those bureaucratic requirements.

Under the proposed legislation, persons not resident in Queensland who are entitled to possess a weapon in a reciprocating State or Territory will be able to possess a weapon of the applicable class while visiting in Queensland. To be a reciprocating State or Territory, a person from Queensland visiting that State or Territory must receive the same recognition for a Queensland licence. Those States and Territories which do not have special licensing provisions will not receive the benefit of our provisions. Those States and Territories which provide only for special licensing for a particular class of weapon licence will have special licensing arrangements only for the same particular class offered to them in Queensland. In particular, these provisions will allow target shooters to travel interstate to compete in competitions, which of course is the example that I have just cited.

Fortunately, standards for licensing throughout Australia are fairly uniform, and

States and Territories which currently have reciprocal licensing arrangements conduct national criminal history checks and national domestic violence order checks on applicants before licensing. I certainly support those two aspects of the Bill. As I said, I personally have concerns about the playing of the game of Skirmish, but it is a fact of life. That particular anomaly has been picked up in the Bill, so that the operators of those businesses can conduct their business in an economic way, but at the same time adequate controls are provided. On the second point, I think the intent is clear. The need for that provision is also clear—so that people, as part of their normal and applaudable recreational pursuits, can take weapons interstate for sporting competitions without the current bureaucratic controls which, as my constituent says, cause inconvenience and some concern.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.57 p.m.): I welcome the contribution by the honourable member for Thuringowa. I intend to cover several of the points that he raised. I should mention to the honourable member that we on this side appreciate very much many of the contributions that he makes these days as being very sensible and very supportive of common interests that we obviously have. We encourage the honourable member to continue in that vein, because he is making a lot of sense.

"Murder" is a word we should not associate with Queensland. It is a word which brings connotations of the bizarre and the terrifying and graphic scenes and images such as the Hoddle Street and Queen Street massacres in Victoria, which have shocked many in our peaceful nation. All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe in their own homes. No Queenslander should feel threatened living in the country or the city, and the shadow of violence should not hang over anyone. It is with those beliefs that I welcome the opportunity to participate, albeit briefly, in the debate on the Weapons Amendment Bill. I believe there is a need in the community for weapons laws which are fair and which do not affect human rights.

There is a need in the community for weapons laws which will act as a monitor for gun licences, a curb for the ever-increasing crime rate suffocating our society and, in the end, to preserve human life. The Labor Party, with the Weapons Act 1990, gave Queensland a law which in many respects has become uncontrollable and unworkable. The Weapons Act 1990 is full of inconsistencies, irregularities and licensing requirements which are totally impracticable. In his excellent contribution in leading this debate, my honourable colleague the member for Crows Nest very clearly demonstrated that fact to this House. However, the criticism of this Act also comes from outside sources.

For instance, the *Securities Industry Journal* described the Weapons Act as "the most unworkable, unlawful and badly drafted piece of legislation seen in years". I suggest to all honourable members that, when a statement such as that is made by experts writing in such a journal, they simply cannot be dismissed as rednecks; they simply cannot be dismissed as people looking after their own sectional and perhaps even hobby or employment interests. I suggest that those statements and those people should be taken very seriously.

The legislation before us created confusion in the community. It is claimed that many licences issued since 1990 may be invalid. In 1990, on behalf of the Liberal Party, I opposed the Weapons Bill. We opposed the Bill because it was decided upon by bureaucrats, with little consultation from key community groups, and because it was written hastily. For a Government that rose to power on the platform of accountability, this treatment of the people of Queensland is totally unacceptable. The Labor Party has decided to look at today's society through rose-coloured glasses, considering its own views with only limited consultation with key community groups and the public. This is a Government that continues to make poor decisions based solely on its bureaucratic committee routine that ignores the community at large, fails to listen to the people of Queensland and has turned representative democracy in this State into a farce.

There is no clearer example of the Labor Party's poor record in drafting legislation than the Weapons Amendment Bill 1993 before us today. We are now faced with 46 pages of amendments to the Weapons Act 1990. The amount of amendments almost exceed the size of the original Act. This is a disgrace for any Government, including the Goss Labor Government. It is a mockery of the Labor Party's bureaucratic process and a shameful reminder of the haste with which legislation has been drawn.

Might I remind the Minister that during the debate on the Weapons Bill in 1990, members on this side of the House pointed out that the Weapons Act would be unworkable and that changes would be forthcoming. A quick glance at the size of the amendment Bill indicates that the Government has taken this advice. But as the honourable member for Crows Nest has said, the amendments do not go far enough.

The number of amendments also makes a mockery of the comments of the honourable

member for Chatsworth, who as Police Minister introduced the Weapons Bill in September 1990 and claimed that it was the most progressive weapons legislation in the country. How saddened he must be by the fact that today this great number and array of amendments are forthcoming. In fact, some provisions, including the sections relating to security guards, have been totally rewritten. In fact, the Act which we are amending is fundamentally flawed.

In the Government's attempt to license the 700 000 gun owners in Queensland, the Weapons Act 1990 failed to protect the rights of citizens; it failed to produce satisfactory licensing requirements, and it failed to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals. The Government has clearly panicked, and we are now faced with an abundance of amendments to correct its initial lack of thought. As the honourable member for Crows Nest and others on this side of the House have said, many of these amendments are spurious and, without any pun intended, right off the mark! The influences that the amendments before us today will have on society may only worsen the situation. It is to these side effects that I wish to now turn my attention.

The proposed amendments to the Weapons Act encompass all facets from definitions to licensing requirements to security guards and security organisations. I wish to briefly examine some of these amendments and indicate areas where further refinement is needed. All members are aware that appropriate terminology is important for any legislation and it is the amendments to definitions in the Weapons Act that provide the focal point of the Bill. For the benefit of those members opposite who obviously have not read the Bill, I point out that 18 words in the Bill have had their definition amended. I remind the Minister that this large number is due to legal irregularities and community backlash. I suggest to honourable members and the Minister that that is a fitting result of the Government's lack of consultation in the initial drafting processes.

The definition of the word "firearm" has been expanded to include "firearms incapable of being operated because of a broken mechanism." However, as the definition of "firearm" is very broad, some effort has been made to condense the definition by excluding such items as a powerhead, explosive tool, captive bolt humane killer, spear gun, longbow and crossbow.

The amendments also try to give a clearer definition of the word "replica". Any replica of a gun capable of causing death or injury is defined as a firearm. The importance of this amendment can be illustrated by a case that occurred late last year. A 16-year old Brisbane schoolboy pleaded guilty in the Brisbane District Court to stealing $3,836 while armed with a replica .45 pistol. The court was told that the youth pretended to cock the pistol as he ordered two workers and a customer onto the floor of the service station. Judge McGuire, the President of the Children's Court, said that he was "very concerned about this sort of child crime." The judge said—

> "Replicas not only look real to the persons confronted menacingly with them, they are real. They ought to be banned."

The amendment dealing with replicas strengthens the regulations and will become important in the constant fight against crime, especially the growing rate of youth crime, of which this Government is well aware.

Just to prove to the Minister that I was sincere when I said that I would say certain nice things to him about his Bill, I will do so now. Only a few years ago, on 18 November 1990, I was reported in one of the newspapers, I think it was the *Sunday Mail*, as making representations about the very serious concerns of some of my constituents, many of whom have children attending the Ascot State School, where a replica pistol was found. In fact, it was more than a replica, because it was capable of firing plastic projectiles. Those projectiles were capable of inflicting injury, particularly to young children. I would like to think that drawing the Minister's attention to situations such as this, as well as other representations made to him, some more effectively than others, by people such as the honourable member for Thuringowa, has generated a good reaction from the Government.

However, as the definition of a replica is still "a copy of a weapon", questions arise as to the broad nature of the definition. I would like members opposite to focus on the practical difficulties and concerns which undoubtedly many of their constituents will still continue to raise with them. As the legislation is written at the moment, a replica could be construed to mean children's toys, many of which are replicas of guns capable of causing death. I ask the Minister: do children's toys need to be registered? If toy guns do need to be registered, surely there needs to be a section in the legislation devoted to this procedure. If the Government does not require toy guns to be registered, then a more concise definition is needed. I make this suggestion seriously to the Minister because, as all honourable members will know, particularly if any of them have been shopping for Christmas presents and birthday presents for children—a pleasure that awaits me in considerable abundance in a few week's time—the problem is

a very real one as those toy guns and other toy firearms do look very much like real weapons.

Dr Watson: And expensive, too.

Mr SANTORO: And expensive, too. I am not sure that I look forward to that particular aspect of the pleasure; nevertheless, we will embrace it as part of the overall process.

The process of issuing licences has also come under review. In determining whether a person is a fit and proper person to hold a licence, authorised persons will now have to consider the changes to the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989. Perhaps the Minister may ask his advisers to consider this aspect.

The proposed amendments will require the issuing officer to examine past and present Queensland and interstate orders. A licence will also be cancelled if persons have an order made against them. As this is the only amendment to licensing requirements, one must assume that the issuing officers will still primarily be members of the police force who, because of a lack of time and with stretched resources, will not be able to give each licence application the appropriate consideration.

During the debate on the Weapons Bill in 1990, I questioned the wisdom of taking up more of the time of our understaffed police force. Today, I once again question the fact that police officers still have to determine the mental state of the person making an application for a licence. As my colleague the honourable member for Crows Nest said, that is absolutely unbelievable. In a very detailed way he put the proposition to the House that often not even a psychiatrist is capable of precisely defining and making an assessment of a person's mental state. Following the guidelines of the Act, a decision on the mental state of a person is made solely on the opinion of the authorised officer. Is a decision based on an opinion by such a person adequate? Clearly the answer to that question is a very emphatic "No"! How can the issuing officer determine whether the person is a fit and proper person if all the officer needs to consider is the mental state of the person and to determine whether that person has committed a crime?

An article in the *Securities Industry Journal* stated—

> "Police at the weapons registry have been used as pawns of the government to carry out unlawful acts."

If this statement is true—and it is a serious charge for anybody to put in writing in a widely circulated journal—I ask the Minister if there should be a greater effort to monitor the weapons registry. Furthermore, if the police are registering gun licences for the Government, is this not in conflict with the separation of powers principle? The consideration of orders under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act will be important in the issuing of licences, but the extra burden being placed on police officers still needs to be questioned. This is why I am very pleased to reiterate my personal support and that of the coalition for a prohibited persons register. Imperfect as the process may be, everybody in this Chamber would appreciate that there is no way that somebody's mental state can always and precisely be definitively assessed by anybody. As I have just said, and as my honourable colleague the Opposition spokesperson acknowledges, that would include assessment by highly qualified psychiatrists. Nevertheless, I believe that a process whereby more expert opinion is brought to bear is infinitely better than what is happening now.

There are some very good police people in the Police Service who possess some of those qualifications, but, as the Minister would readily acknowledge, not all of them are employed within that section where assessments in relation to people's mental health are made. Even if all of them were employed there, there is some doubt amongst members on this side of the House as to whether that amount of expertise—and I am not talking about quality—would be sufficient to handle the great number of applications for gun licences that come before them and all the assessments that are necessary as a result of those applications.

As I have indicated to the Minister outside this House and previously during this debate, not all provisions within this Bill are totally hopeless. I thus think that some acknowledgment should be made of them. For example, the amendment concerning reciprocal arrangements, which was referred to by the honourable member who preceded me, contained in clause 2.20 on page 10 is both positive and sensible for visitors to Queensland. The reciprocal provisions will alleviate the confusion that people have had when travelling to Queensland to participate in shooting competitions and will stop the belief of needing a different shooter's licence for each State. Similarly, the provisions to waive the 28-day cooling-off period for a security weapons applicant who already holds a gun licence can only be beneficial and ease the frustration of many people who have been caught in this situation. It is important that the proposed amendments help to counter the growing rate of crime, especially those involving weapons. Tighter gun control laws in Queensland are long overdue and will mean that finally Queensland

has joined the move of other States for tougher and more uniform weapons legislation.

The recent findings of the Criminal Justice Commission's research into murders in Queensland present a clear reminder of the number of deaths which occur by firearms. The research showed that although the occurrence of murder was rare, the costs to the community were quite substantial. These costs included the psychological trauma of family and friends of people who are affected by crimes committed by firearms; large levels of community anxiety; and economic costs. The costs of losing a relative will never be able to be definitely measured. To combat these costs, a move towards the prevention of accidents, especially those involving firearms, must be made. I respectfully suggest to the Minister and his Government that this particular move should be more serious than that which members are witnessing today.

The results of the commission's research also indicated that nearly half of all suspects were unemployed—a level which, at the time, was six times more than the unemployment rate for Queensland as a whole. The use of weapons overall was, behind assault, the second most frequently used method of killing. In rural areas and country towns in Queensland, over half of the murders were gun related. The Criminal Justice Commission concluded that the ease of access to firearms was the direct cause of this disturbing fact.

I want to clarify some of my comments, because I do not want to be misconstrued as wishing to deprive country people of reasonable access to firearms. The honourable member for Crows Nest and others, who have spoken before me in the interests of the country need, have said that from time to time, even in the hands of young people, those particular firearms are necessary.

With this point in mind, there is a much higher rate of gun ownership in rural Queensland than in the suburbs. The physical isolation of rural Queensland, children being associated with guns from a young age and the limited means of escape from a violent or threatening situation indicate that guns in rural areas are an important part of outback life. As a member of the coalition representing an inner-city electorate, that is something which I recognise. Unfortunately, the abuse of those guns will heighten the probability of accidents in that sector.

Further research conducted throughout Australia and the world has also indicated a relationship between murder and the availability of firearms. In the United States, where the murder rate is six times greater than that of Queensland—and may Queensland never reach that level—three quarters of all murders involved a firearm. Research conducted in 1986 on homicides in New South Wales found that murder by a firearm is significantly greater in rural areas than in the city.

A recent University of Queensland study commissioned by the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia also found that children living in the country were eight times more likely than their counterparts in the city to be injured in a gunshot accident. It is with this in mind that I raise with the Minister the age limit for the licensing of guns. Perhaps he may wish to comment on the process that I have been talking about.

According to clause 3.2 on page 11 of the amendment Bill, a person over 11 years of age may be in possession and use a Schedule 3 weapon in a place where it is lawful only if the minor is under the direct and immediate supervision of a parent or guardian who is licensed to possess the weapon. A case last year heightens this point when a boy from Roma was killed during a kangaroo shooting expedition. The boy was accidentally shot in the head when he stepped into the line of fire of a 17 year old shooter using a high-powered rifle on a rural property.

It must be made perfectly clear that there was nothing illegal with the two boys going on a shooting expedition on the property, but the fact remains whether a 17 year old and, in this case, an 11 year old should be able to legally use a high-powered rifle capable of causing severe damage, let alone death. I remind the Minister that in that particular situation the process of licensing people responsible for using firearms or the supervision of the use of those firearms needs to be toughened up. I suggest to the Minister that perhaps a prohibited persons register, in the overall context of some of the specific incidents that I have mentioned, might be the better way to go.

Mr Fitzgerald, QC, on page 361 of his now famous Fitzgerald report, said—

> "Laws may be futile when they fail to address the problems caused by certain conduct, or when they are inadequately enforced."

When one considers that particular point, one would realise that, in the main and for reasons that I have stated, the legislation which the Bill before us today seeks to amend, falls very much within the category that was defined by Mr Fitzgerald. I ask the Minister to take note of that principle and to bring forward further amendments to this legislation which will be more in accord with that principle.

Time expired.

Mr PYKE (Mount Ommaney) (3.18 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 1993, which I understand was introduced to rectify technical problems affecting the operation and efficiency of the Weapons Act 1990. The issue of community safety is firmly on the Goss Government's agenda. This Bill is an example of the Goss Government's continuing firm commitment towards ensuring the peace and safety of our community. This Bill will assist police to continue to maintain the safety of our community and enhance the ability of police to act against offenders who use or might use weapons in the commission of crimes.

I have listened to the honourable member for Crows Nest and his continued campaign of misinformation and intimidation— his scare tactics which impact particularly on our older people, our senior citizens, and women who live on their own, describing a total breakdown of law and order in some centres. I have also heard with some exasperation the member for Clayfield and other members opposite speaking about crime and law and order issues, particularly today in relation to the issue of gun control.

As a member of the Goss Government, I am very proud to be able to say that we now have a program of gun control in this State. As a former member of the Queensland Police Service, I worked on the streets of Queensland when we had no gun control. Some of my experiences have had a significant impact on my consciousness. I remember going to three separate domestic disputes in Townsville on one particular Friday night during a full moon and coming away from those three separate domestic violence incidents with three separate firearms confiscated from each of those incidents—a shotgun and two rifles.

On occasions like that, my partner and I often wondered how it was that as police officers we were still alive. At that time, under the Government of members opposite there was no legislative framework; the police had no clear policies at that time. I can personally attest that in the seventies and eighties, under the Government of members opposite, in matters of gun crime and gun control some places in Queensland—including Townsville, where I worked at that time—were just like the wild west. In those days, as my colleague the honourable member for Sandgate has pointed out, criminals could buy long-arms and ammunition from the local K mart store without even a cooling-off period. When members opposite talk about these issues they appear to not have had the experiences of confronting angry men that many police officers have had on a regular basis. I have also had the experience of confronting an angry woman who was trying to load a firearm she had pointed at me. I have had the experience of being confronted by two individuals. One was a male with a loaded firearm, pointing it at me, saying that he was going to shoot the next police officer whom he saw—fortunately, he could not see me. The other experience involved being confronted by a mentally disturbed woman who was trying to load a firearm which she was pointing in my direction at the time. When members opposite talk with such obvious ignorance about the issue of gun control, I often wonder whether they have ever had such experiences.

What we are talking about here is the powers of police balanced against the rights of citizens. It is quite obvious to me, as a former member of the Queensland Police Service and now as a member of Parliament who attempts to balance those issues as critically as possible, that our Government does balance those issues. This is a piece of anti-crime legislation which fits within the Goss Government's framework and policies to keep our community safe.

When I hear members opposite including particularly the member for Crows Nest and the member for Clayfield talk about crime and law and order, I realise that their memories are short—very short indeed. I will reiterate at every opportunity that I have that the members opposite used to arrange for their Cabinet-appointed inspectors to be driven home in police cars. As the communications controller for the whole of the metropolitan area, I can recall a time when not one marked police car was available for task assignment in Brisbane at change of shift, because every one of them was transporting an inspector to or from a workplace.

Mr Cooper: Crime has gone completely out of control since you were there— completely out of control over the last four years.

Mr PYKE: I will respond to the member for Crows Nest. How can he say that crime was never out of control under him when his Government supported organised crime and the very worst behaviour of police. His Government acted as an apologist for corrupt police. His Government permitted the very worst abuses by police. His Government permitted loopholes in policing procedures that permitted organised crime to run rampant in this State. The member for Crows Nest has a very short memory.

In particular, I would like to refer specifically to the amendment to section 2.2 of the Weapons Act 1990, which refers to determining whether a person is fit and proper to hold a licence. Under the Act an authorised officer is to consider, amongst other things, whether the

person is subject to an order under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act. The proposed amendment will require consideration of past and present orders, that is, past and present Queensland domestic violence orders and past and present interstate domestic violence orders.

My wife, Maryanne, and I recently attended the very effective Challenging the Legal System's Response to Domestic Violence conference held in Brisbane. I give full credit to the organisers of that conference. I might note that I did not see one member of the National Party or the Liberal Party present at that conference. I was very proud to note that the Goss Government has pioneered many legislative and police procedural anti-domestic violence measures that were envied by workers in the domestic violence field across our nation. That came across loudly and clearly at that very effective week-long conference.

I reiterate my own personal concern that the abuse of women is endemic in our society, entrenched in Queensland under former conservative Governments which exhibited either little or no understanding of the matter—or a desire to maintain the status quo, whereby women were the legitimate victims of male abuse and had very little recourse under the law should they attempt to escape an abusive marriage or relationship. As a police senior constable stationed at Upper Mount Gravatt at the time, I can remember being a member of two deputations of the Brisbane Domestic Violence Group—deputations which confronted two separate National Party Ministers for Family Services. The first one was Yvonne Chapman. I remember very clearly that a member of our deputation fell off her chair in the Minister's office. To this day, I still maintain that it was because of what the Minister, Yvonne Chapman, said at that time—her understanding of "bleating women", as she put it, was incredible. Later, we spoke to the next Minister for Family Services, Peter McKechnie, and again his views on women, the abuse of women and violence against woman were incredibly stupid. I recall his being very patronising and saying that he goes home to his wife and says, "How's your mind, dear?" That was his contribution to understanding women. That was the kind of lack of understanding, gross stupidity or maintenance of the status quo exhibited by the Ministers of the Government of the members opposite.

I am a very proud member of the Goss Government. I am proud to be a member of the most effective Government in this nation with regard to the prevention of the abuse of women in our community. I point to this Bill as an example of the detail and breadth of our legislative framework to prevent violence against women and children and the abuse of women and children. I commend those involved in the preparation of these amendments to the Weapons Amendment Bill and I support the Bill.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Rockhampton—Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.29 p.m.), in reply: The amending legislation before the House is, of course, legislation which reinforces the philosophy which was outlined in the 1990 principal legislation and the philosophy which has been administered pursuant to that legislation. This new legislation in this complex area makes a contribution to making better areas which have shown up as needing to be amended for commonsense and good reasons. It demonstrates again that our Government is prepared to look at how legislation is working, to listen to people and to make sure that, where there are sensible proposals for amendment, they should be made—whether those sensible proposals come from the community, or whether they come from experience of police, the Government or wherever. The amending legislation before the House is, in fact, an amalgam of proposals and suggestions that have come from that great range of experience from police, the community and others.

I would suggest that, despite what most of the Opposition speakers said, the legislation has in fact been eminently successful. There are three major areas that need to be faced in relation to firearms. Those areas are the contribution that firearms, if their availability is too easy, will make to the commission of crimes; secondly, domestic violence; and, thirdly, general areas.

I will deal with the crime area first. Some Opposition speakers made the point that as crime was still occurring, sometimes with the use of firearms, this legislation was basically a waste of time; it would not stop criminals gaining access to firearms. No-one has ever suggested that waving a statute at criminals will prevent them from gaining access to firearms or those other appliances that they sometimes wield in their criminal trade. However, this legislation certainly makes it more difficult for criminals to legally gain access to all sorts of firearms. Therefore, this legislation makes a contribution in that way. It is a sensible starting point. It does not stop criminals stealing firearms or obtaining them illegally, but no sensible person has ever said that it would. The starting point is to make access to firearms more difficult for criminals, not to make it easier. Certainly, this legislation has achieved that.

The second area is domestic violence. No doubt, as it was pointed out by the member for

Mount Ommaney and others, this legislation has been singularly successful in the area of domestic violence. The cooling-off period that is required by the principal legislation, and reaffirmed by this amending legislation, is very sensible. That is very important in the area of domestic violence. Under this legislation, people cannot, in a sense of rage or outrage, go out and immediately acquire a firearm. That makes a real contribution. I will deal further with how the administration of this legislation will make a further contribution to the safety of women and children in domestic violence situations.

This legislation is important in regard to the third area to which I referred, which is the general area. It can reduce the incidence of accidents not only to adults but also to children. I believe that many people who, if they could obtain firearms as easily as they could under the old system, would go ahead and do so, although they do not really need them. Under the old system, they used to get them. Now they have to go through this process of obtaining a shooter's licence, and then there is the cooling-off period. Basically, it is now only those people who genuinely need the firearms who can obtain them. This legislation prevents the proliferation of firearms in houses around the State by people who do not genuinely need them.

The people who do not genuinely want firearms are not prepared to go to the trouble of going through the process. It is not a difficult process; nevertheless, those people do not bother. We all know that, over the years, many accidents have occurred because of loaded firearms discharging and killing either adults or children. One wonders how many of those accidents occurred in homes where there was no need whatsoever for a firearm to be there in the first place. Because firearms were readily available under our predecessors' legislation, people used to get them.

This legislation, and the way it is administered, is also trying to tackle the difficult area of deciding who is a right and proper person to possess a firearm. Because of the siege to which the member for Crows Nest and others have referred, the situation as it stands now has been changed by administrative fiat. We now have the most sensible situation that I believe we can achieve. First of all, a person attends at a station, obtains an application form and a booklet on the weapons laws. That person must then return to the station, undergo a test and submit the application form. We have now amended the application form to at least pick up information from people, who are genuine in their application, about their own health.

The application form now requires details to be listed in relation to psychiatric problems, emotional problems, alcohol or drug-related problems, head injuries, serious impairment of eyesight, fits, dizziness or blackouts. The application must be certified as being correct by the person making the application. There is then provision on the application form for the police officer receiving the application to make comments in respect of the applicant.

As the member for Crows Nest and others said, some police officers, through their experience, are well capable of doing that. The police officer receiving the application then signs it and forwards the application to the Weapons Licensing Branch. This is where we sensibly get close to the sort of system that Mr Cooper would like to have but would not be able to achieve, and that is in relation to prohibiting people from receiving a licence. On receipt of the application, the authorised officer checks the applicant for any Queensland criminal history and for any national criminal history. The domestic violence register is checked and the persons of interest system is also checked. I will refer to that in a minute.

Through the modern, computerised system, we are now able to go through all these checks fairly quickly—criminal history, Queensland and Australia-wide, domestic violence history, Queensland and Australia-wide, and then the persons of interest system to ascertain, as I said, whether the person is a fit and proper person. The persons of interest system now includes the details of warrants executed by police under the Mental Health Act and the details of persons taken into custody without warrant under the Mental Health Act. The Queensland authorised officer now checks all of those cases involving the issuing of warrants to people with serious mental health problems. Of course, that is a great step forward. It is aided and abetted by the computerised system that we have in place.

The member for Crows Nest and others attacked the system of shooter's licences. I reaffirm all the reasons that I gave before about how they are extremely helpful in the prevention of crime and domestic violence and in the general area of preventing too many firearms falling into hands that do not really understand them and do not need to use them.

At this time, we cannot have a system in our country and in our State by which we can compel either lawyers or doctors to disclose other information. We can ask them to do so, and there is a voluntary system in place which, to some extent, can be helpful. However, lawyers are not able to disclose information that they have

obtained from their clients without the consent of their clients. The lawyer's privilege is not really his or her privilege; it is the privilege of the client. For good and sound reasons, that must remain so.

Similarly, in relation to doctors—the member for Crows Nest might talk about his talking to the AMA, but it has made it very clear that the problems involved in disclosing people who generally go to see doctors for mental health reasons would make it impossible to have a compulsory or general system disclosure. That is the situation with which we are faced.

It was also interesting to compare the contribution of the member for Crows Nest with that of the member for Clayfield. Again, it demonstrated the schizoid condition of the so-called partners in Opposition. If I were to summarise the contributions made by the National Party members, it remains clear that they are opposed to the general principles of this legislation. They do not want licensing. They want some form of prohibited persons register, but, for the reasons that I have outlined, that cannot be put in place. However, the member for Clayfield, during his address, said that he wanted to toughen up this legislation, and he outlined areas in which he believed it should be made more difficult.

Mr Santoro: No, what I said was that we should have a look at it.

Mr BRADDY: I heard what the member said. The point I make is that he probably was not present to hear the contributions of members of the National Party. I did. Whether the member for Clayfield likes it or not, it is very clear that his philosophy and his attack on this legislation is totally different from that of the position of the National Party. No wonder they could not get together and achieve an amalgamated party. They cannot even agree on gun legislation. They would not be able to arrange a shotgun marriage because they cannot agree on whether the shotgun should be licensed in the first place. It will be very clear to the people of Queensland who read *Hansard* that members of the Opposition have totally different approaches to gun legislation, as they have in relation to so many other areas.

The member for Crows Nest, Mr Cooper, talked about the need for community debate, a lot of which has taken place. The major place for that debate is here in this Parliament, where he and I and all of the other members of Parliament represent the people. It has been going on——

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Palaszczuk): Order! The member for Crows Nest will cease interjecting!

Mr BRADDY: There was a lot of community debate prior to the 1990 legislation. There has been ongoing debate, proposals and suggestions.

Mr Cooper: And so there should be.

Mr BRADDY: And so there should be. But we should have the primary debate now in this House. Members opposite have every opportunity to participate.

Mr Cooper: This is not where it stops. The people are the winners.

Mr BRADDY: The people make their views known. Certainly, they write to me. No doubt they write to the honourable member also. This legislation is our response to what people have asked us to do. As the member for Thuringowa and other members said, in this legislation we have responded to community suggestions. That is very important for the security industry. I accept the importance of discussions, as suggested by the member for Crows Nest. As we meet in this place, that discussion is ongoing.

The section of the community with a real interest in this legislation has a real opportunity to make its views known. There is now established what we call the Security Industry Advisory Committee, which commenced in September 1993. This has provided a vehicle for liaison with the industry. The committee has become an increasingly important focus for this healthy consultation process to which Mr Cooper referred. That is reflected by its chairmanship now being at director level within the public service. The Security Industry Advisory Committee has full representation from all people in the security industry. It involves major industry members as well as representatives from the smaller business interests such as the Queensland Security Association, to which the member for Crows Nest referred.

I can assure the member and the House that recent developments have provided plans to address the security industry's concerns. The security industry has indicated that it is very happy with this outcome and is supportive of the initiatives now being taken. We have had a general community debate. It has been going on for years, and it will continue. Since this Government came to power, there have been two opportunities to debate this issue. The fact that members opposite made a mess of it the first time and forgot to turn up is not our fault. As I said, the opportunity for debate arose on a second occasion. There is also ongoing discussion within the Security Industry Advisory Committee. In relation to training——

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is not taking interjections. I ask the member to cease interjecting.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Crows Nest!

Mr BRADDY: In relation to training—the member for Crows Nest repeated the QSA's concerns in relation to training courses and qualifications for instructors. In response to his concerns, I wish to inform him that the qualifications for instructors to provide the course required by the current Weapons Act were prescribed by the Commissioner of Police. They are being addressed adequately. Negotiations are, in fact, in train with DEVETIR and the Consumer Affairs Department to ensure formal accreditation of those interim arrangements. By removing this cloud over previous accreditation, much of the security industry's concerns will be resolved.

In relation to the concerns raised by the member for Warwick—I wish to assure him that this legislation, as pointed out by the member for Thuringowa, has addressed those concerns. This legislation raises the principle of reciprocity. Ultimately, in order for the New South Wales farmers' concerns to be addressed, members opposite and the farmers need to go to the Liberal/National Party Government in New South Wales. It needs to pass reciprocal legislation. Once that happens, the concerns raised by the member will be dealt with immediately. We have moved more quickly and efficiently—as usual—than the colleagues of members opposite over the border. They have to pass reciprocal legislation. That is important. Once that occurs, there will be complete respect given to the citizens of New South Wales. All we require is that they, in turn, give the same respect and reciprocity to us, so that we can go into New South Wales and carry out our activities in the exactly the same way that we will agree to here.

I thank the member for Greenslopes for his contribution. He recognised the sensible ways of modern societies for dealing with these problems. I summarised before the areas in which this legislation does that, including the need to have sensible legislation relating to firearms rather than pie-in-the-sky stuff.

The member for Barambah spoke about his opposition to the national register. The national register is about recognising each other's registers. If people register in Queensland, the information about people registered in New South Wales can be exchanged, and so on across the country. Again, he made an extraordinary attack that members of the National Party and Liberal Party persist with, that is, he referred to penny-pinching by the Labor Government in relation to law and order and public safety issues. In a period of less than five years, we have increased operational police numbers by 1 500, and our police budget is 54 per cent higher than Mr Cooper's——

Mr Cooper: Why don't you let the police know where they are?

Mr BRADDY: I take the interjection from the member for Crows Nest. I will relate a little anecdote. Recently, in Rockhampton I attended a send-off for the Assistant Police Commissioner, Laurie Witham, who was the head of the central region. He is a very sincere man. He has done excellent policing work. He served most of his career under the former National Party and National/Liberal Governments. During part of his career, he was the bodyguard to the former Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who was unable to be at his send-off because these days he has to stay in Tasmania. Lady Flo Bjelke-Petersen attended, and she was very welcome. She and I had a good chat about things as they are today in this place.

This man served loyally the Government of the day of whatever political persuasion, as any good police officer should. In his address upon retiring as the longest serving police officer in this State, he made reference to two things that have occurred recently under our Government that, he said, were outstanding.

Firstly, he said that the institution of the Aboriginal and Islander police liaison officers that has occurred in the past 12 months was one of the most outstanding innovations in policing that occurred in his time as a police officer. He wanted to say how successful it had been.

Secondly, he said—and this was from a man who was a loyal public servant to whatever Government was in power—that no Government in his time in policing in this State had done more in terms of providing extra police officers and resources than had our Government since it was elected to office. That came from a man who was a former bodyguard to Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He invited Lady Flo to speak at his send-off, which she was more than pleased to do.

The accolades and tributes from men such as that mean a hell of a lot more than the mouthings from the members for Barambah and Crows Nest. When their party was in power, it underpaid and undermanned the Police Service, and gave it the worst resources of any Police Service in the country.

I also thank the member for Sandgate for his contribution. He outlined from his perspective as a former bank officer the importance of understanding the history of gun laws in this

State, and what a contribution this legislation has made. His experience is real and is not to be confused with the ramblings of people such as the member for Barambah, who has a very sectional view of what should occur in this State.

I have referred to the concerns raised by the member for Warwick, which have in fact been addressed by this legislation but can be finally fixed only by the National Party and Liberal Party people in New South Wales moving also.

I thank the member for Thuringowa for recognising the benefits of this legislation for people such as the sporting shooters, and the reciprocal rights with other States. It is very important that we have that sensible reciprocity. The speech by the member for Thuringowa was very lucid in relation to that recognition.

I have already pointed out how the member for Clayfield is opposed in so many ways to the member for Crows Nest. The two members sit next to each other in geography, but in terms of philosophy, they are a long way apart. As to the concerns raised by the member for Clayfield about children's toys—if the children's toys can be defined as "replicas" in accordance with the definition, then of course they have to be assessed and registered accordingly. However, if they are not, they do not. We have to make practical decisions on these issues. As to any toys that fire projectiles—they are classified as firearms. They are not judged as replicas; they are judged as firearms, and again they have to be dealt with on that basis.

Mr Santoro: I gave you credit for that.

Mr BRADDY: I am merely referring to it. The member asked a question, and I am replying to it.

In common with the member for Sandgate, the member for Mount Ommaney has had real experience not of sectional interests but of interests right across the State. His real experience, both prior to this legislation and since this legislation and in relation to criminals and general members of the community, bears out that this legislation has made a real contribution to a more balanced society, which of course is an issue to which the member referred. No legislation waved around in this place or outside can effect gun laws that will guarantee that no-one is criminally or accidentally hurt by guns, but legislation such as this can make a contribution to diminishing that problem. This legislation has done that, and these amendments will ensure that that continues.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. P. J. Braddy (Rockhampton— Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) in charge of the Bill.

Clerical Error

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Bredhauer): Honourable members, before I call the clauses to the Bill, the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel has advised that there is a grammatical error on page 8, line 2. The word "a" has to be inserted before the word "firearm". If there are no objections, I will arrange for the clerks to make the necessary correction.

Clause 1—

Mr SPRINGBORG (3.54 p.m.): I seek clarification on an aspect that is not included in the Bill. I refer to the reciprocity principle. In his reply, the Minister alluded to the issue of people being able to purchase firearms in Queensland and then being able to take them back across the border into New South Wales. Is it the case that the New South Wales Government has to agree to a similar arrangement before that can occur?

Mr BRADDY: Yes.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have one other inquiry. At present, people from interstate must hold a visiting shooter's permit to be allowed to shoot in this State. Has the same applied to this date for Queensland shooters travelling interstate, or do we currently have full reciprocal rights?

Mr BRADDY: No. In order to obtain reciprocal rights, both sides must agree to have the same legislation. Through this legislation, we are saying that we are ready to go. It is up to them to meet us.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr COOPER (3.56 p.m.): Clause 7 is the limitation on the issue of a licence. It refers to domestic violence orders. During the second-reading debate, reference was made at length to the prohibited persons register. In that context, I inform the Minister that I maintain the view that we need and must push for wider debate on the prohibited persons register. As the Minister said, we must consider the ethical issues. I also made reference to that matter. However, in the same context, we have the wider good of the community to consider. That is why I say: let the debate take place.

Proposed new subsection (c) states—

> "whether the person is or has been subject to a domestic violence order, or is or has been subject to an interstate order,

within the meaning of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989."

I ask: when does that order actually take effect—when it is issued by the court or when it is served on the police?

Mr BRADDY: It takes effect immediately the court makes the order, similar to the revocation of a driver's licence. I think it would be universal that the person against whom this order would be made is present in the court. In any event, if there are instances—and I cannot think of any—where that is not the case, the point is that the order takes effect immediately, and it applies from that time.

Mr COOPER: I thank the Minister. I seek further clarification. The Minister said that it takes effect immediately. If an application is being issued for a licence, is the issuing officer informed immediately that the court has made that ruling? Does the Minister see my point about a time lapse between the two?

Mr BRADDY: With modern computerisation, the present system is obviously far better than it ever could have been before. It takes only as long as it takes the officer to communicate with the appropriate computer, in effect, which can be done almost instantaneously.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 and 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr COOPER (3.58 p.m.): Again, I seek clarification. Clause 10, which is on page 14 of the Bill, refers to the possession or use of a weapon by a person under the influence of liquor or a drug. As we know, under the Traffic Act, the legal intoxication limit is .05. Breathalysers are used to establish the level of intoxication of a certain person. When the legislation refers to possession or use of a weapon by a person under the influence of liquor or a drug, what procedure is used to establish that fact? Will breathalysers be used? Is the legal limit .05, or what is the criteria? Could the Minister explain that to me?

Mr BRADDY: There are no statutory limits as there are for people in relation to drink-driving. The people will have to use the same indicia as they would use in relation to criminal offences. In a rape case or a murder case, it might be relevant for a jury or a court to decide whether a person was or was not under the influence of liquor at the time of the offence. We have to fall back on the old indicia tests. The same would apply here. There is no statutory statement that a person is under the influence of liquor merely because he or she registers as being .05 or more. In common with criminal offences, there is no statutory requirement that people must be subjected to a breathalyser or a blood test. It is not alone in that respect. There are occasions in relation to this legislation and the criminal law generally where it is necessary to make a judicial decision as to whether a person is or is not under the influence of liquor or a drug. That is not beyond the wisdom of judicial officers and juries, and that is what has to be done in this instance.

Mr COOPER: I understand what the Minister is driving at, but just for clarification, so that everyone knows what happens, if a person is in charge of a weapon and that person is under the influence of a drug or alcohol, then the indicia factor must be taken into account. Does that mean that the police officer can have the person walk a white line to see whether they are in control of themselves? Clarification is needed because this is totally different from when a person is driving a car. We are not talking about a breathalyser; we are not talking about .05 or .08. I ask the Minister to explain it so that all honourable members know the position.

Mr BRADDY: There are lots of coordination tests that are sensibly available now. The police officer would have to use his or her common sense in this regard. Obviously, if it is done in conjunction with another offence——

Mr Veivers: Explain this very clearly.

Mr BRADDY: As the member for Southport would understand, if this was done in conjunction with the investigation of another offence, that indicia of a breathalyser test would be able to be used, but that is because some other events and actions occurred. Usually, if the person was not driving a motor vehicle at the time, there would be no reason to take a urine or blood sample or carry out a breathalyser test. Police officers must use common sense. They can use coordination tests, or they can say something along these lines: "The defendant's breath smelt strongly of liquor, and his eyes were uncoordinated." A whole host of other tests that used to be carried out can be used. That is the way it has to be.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mr COOPER (4.03 p.m.): My comments relate to the club register, which is mentioned on page 21. Proposed new section 3.48C (2) states—

"Before a person uses a range of an approved shooting club to discharge a

weapon, the person must enter in the range use register the details provided for by the register regarding the person's identity and the type of weapon the person will use on the range."

I did table a letter, which undoubtedly the Minister will have. What I am really asking is that the Minister take on board the sort of situation referred to in that letter. That is exactly what I was referring to. In a letter from Enron, a Mr Herrington detailed the theft of his weapons. He also said that he was victim No. 8 and that he believes that the thefts are occurring because someone is getting inside information. That is the genuine belief of Mr Herrington, and that seems to be the belief of quite a number of police officers, as well as people involved in the shooting clubs.

As I said, that letter has been tabled. The recommendations would be that instead of listing names and weapons on the form, the shooters provide the police and some pistol club officers with a list of weapons and that, when registering, they use only their pistol club ID number. We would like some consideration to be given to those sorts of things.

Mr BRADDY: I understand the problem that the member raises. It would be of some comfort to him to know that this matter has been considered and that when this new legislation is proclaimed there will be a new regulation removing the requirement about the address. No address will appear on any club ID. The member suggested that these break-ins might be occurring because somebody is giving out inside information, and that is a possibility. That person on the inside would be in a position to know who has pistols at home. However, removal of the address from the register will at least diminish the possibility of that information falling into the wrong hands.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Mr COOPER (4.05 p.m.): Clause 17, on page 29, replaces Part 3, Division 7 (Security guards). I know that this was discussed during the second-reading debate. Nevertheless, I want to place on record that the replacement of Part 3, Division 7 concerning security guards and security organisations is one aspect of the Bill about which we are very concerned. I have had lengthy discussions with personnel of the Queensland Security Association. I suppose the reason why we are not actually opposing segments of this Bill is that their views really have not been fully taken into consideration. We are not opposing this clause; we are just saying that in regard to security guards, certain factors have to be given further consideration. Now that the role of security guards and security organisations has been clarified—and I do believe that that has occurred—it is time for continuing the discussions. Hopefully, the amendments to follow might take these matters into account. As I said during the second-reading debate, there are about 14 000 security guards across the State— more than double the number in the Police Service—so they have a major role to play.

As I said, there are many matters of consequence that require further attention as regards the security industry. The Weapons Amendment Bill has failed to address those concerns. The legislation has been viewed as not adequately serving the needs of the security industry and enabling it to provide an efficient and effective service. That is what this Parliament needs to do, and the reasons for that are quite obvious. The proposed legislation does not go far enough; it does not clarify fully the position of security guards. As I said, the Opposition does not necessarily oppose the clause or seek to have it redrafted. However, we do say that certain matters require further consideration.

I guess the main point that I want to make is that the wording in this Bill is ambiguous. The common complaint from people working in the industry is that the wording of the current legislation in relation to security guards and security organisations is ambiguous. That ambiguity has left the way open for certain individuals and groups—even Government bodies—to loosely interpret the Act to seemingly suit their needs, no matter what situation arises or what happens to confront them. That ambiguity and the inconsistency in decision making by the powers that be is upsetting to them, and I can see their point. That is the sort of thing that we have to overcome.

We recognise that the security industry in this State has come of age. It is definitely a very professional organisation. It has adopted advanced training methods and its skilled members are involved in the protection of persons and property throughout the State. That is why I say it is time that the Government and all members of this Parliament gave the security industry some voice in the drafting of legislation that is relevant to that industry.

Mr BRADDY: I will repeat what I said during the second-reading debate. One of the good things that happened in recent years was the establishment of the Security Industry Advisory Committee, which represents all the different players in the security industry, from the large to the small, including the QSA. The QSA and

others have indicated their concerns regarding the training courses and the qualifications of instructors. The concerns held by the security industry regarding training are currently being addressed in the consultation process. I assure the member for Crows Nest that there is no need to further amend the legislation. All of those concerns which relate to the qualifications of instructors to provide the courses required by the current Weapons Act as prescribed by the Commissioner of Police can be addressed by negotiation, administration and regulation.

The Act as it stands is not specific on the provision of instructions for the prescribed courses. Therefore, the Act itself does not need amendment. At the present time, interim arrangements are made by the police for training civilian instructors at the Police Academy. Negotiations are now in train with DEVETIR, the Consumer Affairs Department and the players from the Security Industry Advisory Committee to ensure that formal accreditation of these interim arrangements is made. When this is done by formal accreditation, I am quite sure that will satisfy their needs. Because the Act is not specific, it will not require more amendment. Discussions are under way. I understand that the security industry people are happy with those discussions. I am quite confident that the outcome will be to their satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the Government and the Queensland Police Service.

Mr SANTORO: I want to reinforce some points made by the shadow Minister and refer to a point made by the Minister during his reply in relation to the satisfaction of the security industry. I tried to get the Minister's attention. Because I need to make other contributions in this place later today, I did not want to provoke you, Mr Temporary Chairman, to the extent that I would perhaps be legally deprived of my ability to make those contributions.

I want the Minister to have a look at the first issue of the *Security Industry Journal* covering the first quarter of 1994. The first page of that journal carries the headline "The Weapons Act Debacle" and states "Turn to Page 5". It then discusses in considerable detail the submissions that have been made to this Government in relation to very substantial amendments to this particular Act which, with respect to everything that the Minister has said, have not been made. Opposition members will talk to people in the industry to determine whether, in fact, what the Minister is saying about satisfactory progress is true. I can tell the Minister that I work very closely with the honourable member who sits beside me in this House.

Mr Braddy: You don't agree.

Mr SANTORO: The Minister is wrong. There is nothing that he can analyse in any of our contributions that is at variance. I challenge him to do so. I challenge him also to circulate people within the industry with his analysis of our so-called differences. The Minister still has a long way to go before he keeps the security industry happy. I would like to see what the industry says in future editions of its journal.

The Minister's point that we are out of touch and that he is in touch with the security industry does not stand up to any significant scrutiny. People in the security industry have suggested pages and pages of amendments which they need to keep their particular industry happy. I refer to one point that the industry made, which I mentioned in my contribution but which the Minister did not address. Members in the industry state that the conditions on licences issued to security guards are unlawful. They then talk about the effect that provisions of this Bill have on their insurance policies. Basically, they claim that some of the provisions negate the validity of those insurance policies. When people are saying that legislation actually forces them to break the law, there is a real worry. They are clearly not happy. I ask the Minister to take on board the spirit of the suggestions made by the honourable member for Crows Nest.

Sometimes an enormous number of people visit members. Undoubtedly, an enormous number of small traders have gone to see Mr McElligott and, undoubtedly, an enormous number of small retailers have consulted members of the Opposition. We then try to tell the Minister what our broad constituencies—or individual constituencies— tell us, and he just ignores that. The Minister should open himself fully to that process of consultation. I strongly recommend that he take on board the well-meaning spirit of the shadow Minister's suggestions as to consultation.

This Parliament is very important. It is also important to talk directly to the people. The propensity of this Government, and particularly the Minister, is to ignore most of what the Opposition says—despite the good sense that it invariably makes—and go about in its own perverse way introducing these types of amendments which, with respect, are not worth the paper they are written on. The Minister should not grin or get sarcastic, bitchy or nasty.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Bredhauer): Order! The honourable member will come back to the clause.

Mr SANTORO: I am coming back to the point. The Minister should seek to be relevant. I feel compelled to ask the Minister and other members opposite to be relevant by listening to

people, otherwise they will be out on their ears quicker than they think.

Mr COOPER: I want to raise two matters. I am concerned about the Minister's statement about no need for further amendments within the security industry.

Mr Braddy: Training.

Mr COOPER: The Minister refers to training only. That must be clarified. The Minister knows the industry as well as I do. He knows that it will be back with more amendments. That is its right. Because of its massive contribution, it is our job to listen to the industry and to take on board its suggestions. I am glad that has been clarified.

I also want to mention the $1,000 fee for small security firms, which obviously have great difficulty paying that sum. I seek some clarification and perhaps even hold out some hope that those small firms will not have to pay such a massive fee. It is quite in order to have a scale of fees for small security firms. The Minister might like to give them some reason for hope.

Mr BRADDY: I am not allowed to smile or get angry. I am not quite sure what I am allowed to do.

Mr Veivers: Be nice.

Mr BRADDY: Just be nice? I shall be nice. Some of my comments are in reply to both members. First of all, the honourable member for Clayfield should not fall for the trap of thinking that that particular journal he put out reflects the views of all people in the industry.

Mr Santoro: I do not put it out.

Mr BRADDY: I did not say that the member did. That journal comes from a very small group within the industry, reflective of the QSA, and it does not even reflect the views of all the members of that group. They are entitled to their point of view, but they are not representative of the security industry at all. They are representative of only a small section of it. It is true to say that they are unhappier than the larger sections——

Mr Santoro: Seventeen hundred members. Is that a small number?

Mr BRADDY: The point that the member did not get across to the House is that the journal is not an organ of the whole of the security industry. Therefore, it represents a minority of the people involved in the industry. That does not mean they are not entitled to their point of view.

Secondly, and probably more importantly, although they are a minority group and very vocal, they are represented on the Security Industry Advisory Committee, to which I have referred several times. Not only do they have a say when legislation is being drafted but also an ongoing dialogue with the Queensland Police Service about matters such as training courses and all the other matters that the honourable member for Clayfield and his colleague the member for Crows Nest have raised. We do not dismiss them as unimportant because they are not the majority group, but the member should not overstate their importance in the industry or the people they represent. They certainly do not represent the majority. The majority are far happier than that group is with the current situation.

As we continue this dialogue—and we will continue it—all these things can be worked through. I am not convinced that the fees should be changed. The honourable member for Crows Nest is welcome to pass that on to the QSA, and it can continue to argue within the Security Industry Advisory Committee for change and forward to me and the honourable member comments in relation to that matter. At this time, I do not propose to suggest any changes in that regard.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 27 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Braddy, by leave, read a third time.

MARINE SAFETY BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 18 February (see p. 7005).

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory) (4.22 p.m.): While the world comes to grips with aligning itself with the latest International Maritime Organisation recommendations on ship safety, Australia, a signatory to the latest IMO conventions, has some internal trouble brewing. Some of the Australian States, led by Queensland, have decided to fly in the face of conventional wisdom by getting into a policy of self-regulation.

As the State with the largest fleet of commercial vessels, the largest tourist numbers and, therefore, the largest amount to lose, is it wise to change a system which is working well? Every engineer knows that if something is running well, do not fix it. Why fix it if it is not broken? That is the situation with which we are confronted in this Bill. With the misguided zeal of some bureaucratic recruits from the south, the Goss Government has in the past couple of years

dismantled the Marine Board, restructured the systems and totally demoralised the remaining staff in the Marine Division of the Department of Transport.

The Marine Safety Bill is closely related to the Pollution of Waters by Oil Bill which came before the House in late 1992. I had many serious doubts about the effectiveness of that Bill, and said so at the time. I referred to a series of improvements that the Opposition would have made. It is pleasing, therefore, to see that this recent Bill has taken some of the Opposition's comments from that time and incorporated them into what appears to be a new direction. For a start, there is no mention of million dollar fines and the like, which the Opposition has long said would be impossible to collect, and, furthermore, it encourages concealment—the worst possible response to a marine accident.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that the Marine Safety Bill was tossing the 1958 Act overboard. That would not be surprising. It is now 36 years old and, as such, the march of time renders some parts of that Act obsolete—but not all of it, by any means. Let us not forget that this 36-year-old Act has fostered Australia's most innovative and dynamic shipbuilding industry.

The point the Minister did not bring to attention was that the Bill substantially modifies the 1992 Act also, and one would have thought that an Act would endure longer than two years if it were any good. It would appear that the current Bill essentially says that the Pollution of Waters by Oil Bill of 1992 was poorly thought out, and the Opposition would agree with that. The Opposition said at that time that our approach to marine safety involved a three-part policy direction, and we have seen no need to alter that since then. The first policy direction is education; the second, prevention; and, the final policy direction is containment. The current Marine Safety Bill contains all three policy directions as quoted by the Opposition, and therefore in that regard has our support. May I reiterate that we still see penalty and punishment as negative and unworkable policy directions.

A further point that the Opposition supports in the Bill is that it encourages people in the industry to innovate and apply their skills and experience to the improvement of marine safety. We support this as we consider that the industry holds the greatest reservoir of knowledge on marine safety—greater than resides in the Government, greater than resides in the bureaucracy, greater than resides in the Opposition. However, the point I would like to make is that there was nothing wrong with the capacity of the industry to innovate in the first place. Queensland's ship design and ship building industry has sold many designs overseas. We are securing many interstate orders also. There was never a problem there, so why meddle in something that is working well?

What was wrong with the Queensland system? Absolutely nothing! We were doing the fastest plan approval and surveying the largest Australian commercial fleet with a team much smaller than any other State. There had been no fatalities in the last 15 years with commercial vessels, which clearly illustrates the suitability of the existing Act.

The Minister stated—

> "The Bill enables players in the industry, the designers and builders of ships and boats particularly, to come up with innovations which, provided they meet with certain safety standards, will be totally acceptable."

What a load of total rubbish! Can the Minister please enlighten us with one example of a designer or builder having an innovative design hindered in any way? In fact, the reverse is the case. In the last ten years, the innovative designs of Queensland's NQEA, Asdmar and Riviera have been successfully sold overseas to 40 countries. Most of these innovative designs were trialled in Queensland after plan approval here, with no hindrance reported by the principals of these successful companies.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated that there is a fine balance between the need to guarantee safety and the need for efficiency and innovation. The implication here is that to have one you must sacrifice the other. I do not agree—effective public administration finds win-win positions. There does not need to be the play-off that the Minister suggests, and I can assure this House that there will not be one under a coalition Government.

I certainly see a great number of issues in the Bill that the Opposition has previously advocated over a year ago. However, we see a number of issues which do not get addressed and which should be addressed in a Bill such as this. I will outline some of the deficiencies that I see in the Bill.

The Bill is somewhat contradictory and appears in one part to exclude ships on overseas and interstate voyages. Clause 12 (1) and (2) states that the Queensland Act will not apply to a ship that is the subject of the Commonwealth Navigation Act, on the grounds that marine safety is a shared function between State and Commonwealth Governments. This could be interpreted as excluding from the provisions of the Act any vessel on an interstate or overseas

voyage, as these come within the Federal ambit. If that is a genuine limitation, then the Bill is too limited in the extent of its coverage.

By contrast, clause 11 (1) of the Bill states that the Act will apply to all ships that are connected with Queensland, including all ships in Queensland waters on intrastate, interstate and overseas voyages. This is a more sensible approach, as there is so little tonnage of intrastate cargo or passenger services that the Bill would be left with very little jurisdiction except that of commercial fishing boats, tourist boating and pleasure vessels.

In Australia, we have a system of ship inspections that tries to keep our shipping lanes safe and free from the worst types of ships. This inspection service is operated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. The AMSA has often been accused by mining companies and overseas shipping interests of being too severe in its inspections and of pushing up the bulk export freight rates. The Australian inspections are certainly more severe than the inspections in many overseas countries. They would want to be, too. In many countries the standards are so poor that they may as well not be there at all. More than anything else, it is this point that forms the threat to our environment and shipping safety.

Mr Patrick Quirk, General Manager of the AMSA, said it quite clearly—

> "Regrettably we know that inspections are not so severe in Third World countries and it is often these seafarers from the Third World who pay for the neglect with their lives."

At the same time, the environment also pays for this neglect. In 1993, the AMSA inspected 1 956 vessels, and found 1 350 faults. In many cases the faults were minor, and were rectified easily. However, in 75 cases, the vessels failed to meet international convention standards and were detained as they posed a threat to safety of their crews and to the environment. Many of those defects were long standing.

I might add that this is only the tip of the iceberg, and it does not include the substandard ships that slip through the gaps in the inadequately funded AMSA net. The AMSA concluded that, in many cases, operators were only repairing damage which was listed for repair during a port-state inspection. Port-state inspections can provide only a snapshot of the state of a vessel. There is no substitute for an effective survey and inspection regime undertaken by owners/managers and classification societies.

It is unfortunate that the Bill before the House does not say anywhere that Queensland ports will actively participate in, and fund, the operations of the AMSA.

Amid a great deal of publicity about the corporatisation of the Brisbane and Gladstone Port Authorities, no mention is made in the press, at any rate, of what the privatised port authorities will do about marine safety. Captain Vic Cupitt, of the Port Users Group, has expressed his concern that the Government is going down the corporatisation path as a means of generating revenue. There is the added concern that a private port authority will be less accountable to safety regulations than its non-private counterpart. The State Treasurer, Mr De Lacy, has said that any dividends will be reinvested in port infrastructure. That also means marine safety infrastructure. However, he has conceded that dividends will be a bonus, rather than an expected performance criteria. Does that mean that a private port authority will invest in marine safety technology only if it makes a profit, whereas if it breaks even, or worse, marine safety is neglected? That is of great concern to Opposition members.

It is difficult to take seriously the assurances we are hearing from this Government and its counterpart in Canberra that shipping in Australian waters is safe. Australian safety standards are among the most stringent in the world. However, they are still woefully inadequate to deal with the problem of substandard ships. That is not a criticism of the AMSA, which I hold in the highest regard, but of the painful inadequacy of the legislative provisions within which it is forced to act. A substandard ship under any flag may enter the Barrier Reef at any time and it is not touched until it reaches a port, and not always then, either.

I bring to the attention of members of this House the case of the APJ Anand. It was one of several ships operating under a single voyage permit, that is to say, because a domestic carrier could not be found it had special permission to operate a single voyage between two Australian ports. Despite a policy requirement that every SVP vessel be inspected, because there was no AMSA inspector at the loading port of Albany in Western Australia, that did not happen.

The standards of safety at sea do not relate just to the safety of the vessel. I bring to the attention of members the case that occurred last year when two sailors died when an overseas vessel docked in an Australian port. Those sailors were overcome by fumes from some cleaning solvent that they were using. Later, it was found that they were using the solvent incorrectly, but the safety directions were not

printed in their native language. The death of two men is bad enough, but what if the crew of that vessel were bunkering oil, and the safety instructions were printed in a language that they could not read? The consequences would be much worse.

A more recent example is the case of the Holy Sea, a bulk iron ore carrier registered in Panama, as members would have guessed. That vessel had recently run aground in South America and, because of its age and the extent of its damage, it was sold for scrap. However, despite the announcement that it had been sold for scrap, 15 months later the vessel turned up in Australian waters, much to the concern of Hamersley Iron, which refused initially to load it with iron ore.

The question that I have of the Bill before the House is: where is the provision that addresses the problem of flag of convenience registered vessels sailing off the Queensland coastline? I see no such provision! I see many provisions relating to the accreditation of local ship designers, local ship builders, local ship repairers—and I shall have more to say on this shortly—but it is the critical deficiency of the lack of regulation of overseas shipping that causes the Opposition the most concern. I see in clauses 203 and 204 references to a certain regulation under the Act giving effect to an international treaty, convention or agreement. However, I do not consider that that goes anywhere near proactively preventing substandard shipping from coming near our coastline.

Australian charterers and owners—and Governments also—who hope that they can improve ship safety through their own actions need to realise that the real shipping control centre lies in the newly industrialised economies of Asia. Some of those countries do not have the same regard for ship safety as we do, thus the safety of international shipping is determined by the lowest rather than the highest standard in the world. We need to establish relations with other nations, in particular those on the Pacific Rim, in order to provide as a benchmark a high standard of vessel safety. For example, Korea would be an ideal nation with which to establish a link. It is a developing nation that upholds the highest standards of shipping safety requirements, while at the same time its shipping industry is supporting one of the fastest growing economies in Asia.

The world body charged with the task of keeping international shipping safe is the International Maritime Organisation. Because there are obvious rewards in turning a blind eye to unseaworthy vessels, that body always has difficultly maintaining sufficient discipline among its 147 member nations. Often, by adopting lower standards a country can offer cheaper shipping to its trading partners, but the gain is only short term.

Unfortunately, there are always marine charterers who are looking for rates that they are perfectly well aware are below the rate that could sustain a safe and properly crewed vessel. Everybody finishes up worse off with unsafe shipping. Not one self-respecting long-term participant in the industry has requested, or would welcome, self-regulation. That would mean open slather for the below-standard imposters who will choose to compromise safety standards to save a dollar. The results of this type of self-regulation are clearly highlighted in the Federal Government's Ships of Shame report, which illustrated that flags of convenience vessels, a similar form of self-regulation, invite disaster for not only the public but also for seafarers, the industry, and for our State.

The World Bank has said that, before the year 2000, the world shipping community will need to spend US$400 billion to upgrade an ageing fleet. This Bill before the House relies on certification by a classification society. However, some of these societies issue certificates that are not worth the paper that they are written on. The society is often nothing more than an employers' club, and has no intention of making any effort to provide for safe shipping.

I see nothing in this Bill that suggests to me that there will be an appendix to the subsequent Act listing approved societies. That is a serious defect that the Minister should consider rectifying. The Bill certainly says that there will be approved repairers, but at the national level does not say that there will be approved classification societies.

For that reason, I consider that the self-regulation of shipping safety cannot be left to the industry. There is not enough commitment among many of the operators to make it work. The Bill is not really the work of Queensland draftsmen at all. No doubt, the prime mover behind it is Bill Upton, a former Federal public servant who has come to Queensland to show us how we should be running the show. I can assure members that Bill Upton, fresh from Canberra, who has absolutely no experience in the marine industry, has allowed ego and position to rule the day. This Bill is the culmination of his expensive efforts to show Queensland how to do it right.

Great marine disasters involving small vessels have occurred. Last year, we saw two Filipino ferries capsize, with the loss of several hundred lives. There was another in Haiti, with

300 lives lost. Queensland cannot afford a dalliance along a fantasy trip. If we had a ferry capsize, what would be the cost to tourism? The answer is: tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue. One can only sue the designer or the builder, as the Bill suggests. Most do not carry professional indemnity. I think the Minister should check that out. The safety of the travelling public lies squarely at the feet of the Government. To suggest otherwise is ludicrous. The State will suffer the consequences of bad legislation and, as such, should exercise caution in making any radical changes. This sort of nonsense has failed elsewhere. Why should the Government try to blueprint failure?

After four years of wasted effort in rectifying something that was not broken, all Queenslanders must ask: who foots the bill for Bill's Bill? Unfortunately, it will be the public. In the Explanatory Notes, the Minister said that much of the Bill is drafted in modern language. This is a bit confusing, as Parliament has always conducted business in modern language. It has been many years since Parliaments have drafted or spoken in Latin or in any other ancient or classical language. I suspect that the Minister means that the Bill is drafted in English, as spoken by the general reader, rather than the English of lawyers. Indeed, much of the Bill is drafted in lay language, and it becomes almost conversational in many parts. In one regard, this is a step in the right direction. However, I hope that, due to the irregular form of the drafting, this does not lead to difficulty or imprecision in legal interpretation later on.

It is unusual to see a Bill drafted in this manner. I would have thought that a more effective way to deal with the issue would be to publish a set of user guidelines to accompany the Bill. The Explanatory Notes and the supplementary guides for the lay reader are the usual place for conversational and lay dialogue. Even though I do not have the formal legal training as the Minister and the academics on the opposite side of the House boast that they have, this would have been the direction that the Opposition would have taken, at any rate.

On the administrative and implementation plans for the Bill, I see positive processes in place to ensure compliance and effective operation. There are performance indicators required, and there are requirements for the Transport Department to report once per annum on the achievement of these performance indicators. The Opposition strongly supports this technique of management of objectives, borrowed from the private sector, to evaluate the performance of Government instrumentalities. The problem with all of the management by objective techniques, however, is that results rely heavily on the quality and focus of the objectives themselves.

The Minister did not convey in his second-reading speech what these performance indicators are. However, they are certainly something that the House needs to know. The performance objectives need to be framed in terms of how many vessels enter or operate within Queensland waters and are subsequently found by local, overseas, interstate class society inspection, and so on, to have been below satisfactory condition. To frame performance objectives for a Bill such as this in terms of numbers of inspections carried out, number of employees qualifying through training courses to become certified inspectors, and in similar ways is not effective. They are purely bureaucratic measures. The real measure of marine safety in Queensland is in the reduction of the number of unseaworthy vessels, but this Government does not seem to think that is so.

I bring to the attention of the House that the Morris committee was told that a conservative estimate—and this is conservative—was that no less than 50 vessels a year entered Australian waters in poor to very poor condition. Some come to Queensland; some pass the coast and continue on to southern ports. But the point is that the real dangers of unseaworthy shipping are only marginally touched upon in this Bill. I cannot see in the Bill any provision for a black list of vessels; I cannot see any provision for a black list of societies that issue permits that are not worth the paper on which they are written; and I cannot see any provision of a black list of vessels operating with crews holding substandard qualifications. This is all very bad.

I consider that it is necessary for Queensland port authorities—indeed, all Australian port authorities—to establish a black list and to circulate it among themselves. This would get rid of the ludicrous situation in which a vessel could call at one port, be inspected and certified as safe, and then go on to another port where the inspections are tougher and come out with a long list of repairs. This is exactly what happened some time ago. A foreign registered vessel was inspected at Gladstone and given a clean safety rating. It then went on to Port Kembla and was found to have 160 defects. One or two would not make Australian shipping standards too bad overseas, but 160 is ridiculous.

Clause 204 of the Bill states that a regulation under the Act may give effect to the Uniform Shipping Law Code adopted by State, Territory or Commonwealth Ministers. That is too vague. It should be clearly stated that, if a vessel fails inspection where the inspection is made

pursuant to an Act of any other State, Territory or the Commonwealth, it shall be deemed to have failed inspection for the purposes of the Queensland Act. That should be automatic, not "maybe". This should also be supported by a national computer database of unseaworthy ships—a national black list, if members want to call it that.

I would like to discuss the subject of accreditations of ship builders and ship designers. My information from the industry is that nobody from the Government has consulted them on the economics of the industry. If they had done so, clauses 59 to 62 would not have been drafted as they have been. Marine designers referred to in section 58 make only a small amount of their income from the actual design of the vessel. The main source of employment is in the supervision of the construction, or shipbuilding. These operations are listed separately. From clause 59 (1) of the Bill, it is clear that a designer is not automatically accredited as a shipbuilder of a ship that he has designed. This will make the operation of the Bill impossible. It is like saying that a civil engineer is not qualified as a registered builder on a building of his own design. The economics of the industry are such that nobody could afford to be a designer under clause 58, unless he were also able to perform the role of shipbuilder of the vessel he designed. That, after all, is where the bread and butter of the industry is—not in the design. The Bill needs to allow for a ship designer to build his own design.

The next part of the accreditation system that falls down is the opportunity for an individual to obtain accreditation and then simply rent his name to the highest bidding cowboy. There is nothing to say that the accredited individual must actually perform any design or rebuilding work himself. He may simply become a sleeping partner, or similar, in a company that employs others without any qualifications at all to do the actual work.

The final point that I wish to make about accreditation is in relation to the issue of acceptance. The Bill is going against the logic of all other Australian States. There is no suggestion that Queensland accreditation will be accepted interstate. The current Queensland shipbuilding industry is very pro-active in chasing interstate business. One operator with whom I spoke has 50 per cent of his business interstate, but he finds interstate competition very intense. Under the current system, a vessel inspected in Queensland is automatically certified interstate. Under the proposed scheme, there will be no inspection, only a Queensland-issued accreditation, which is not accepted interstate. This means that to build to interstate requirements, a local builder will have to fly an inspector from interstate, lodge him, fly him home and meet any number of additional expenses. In spite of this, extra costs remain competitive with bidders elsewhere. There could be nothing quite so detrimental to a healthy local industry as this. It is particularly bad when local manufacturers are trying to secure business from interstate, our domestic market and the international market.

In summary, I cannot support the Marine Safety Bill. The local issues are poorly handled. The whole Bill is nothing other than change for the sake of change. National issues are not handled at all. The fundamental flaws in Queensland leaving its doors open to flag-of-convenience ships remain unaddressed. On a matter of public safety and diligent public expenditure, we not only condemn the Goss Government but also reject the Bill. We also respectfully suggest that the Goss Government endorse its own platform of consulting people and trimming the bureaucracy. Here is a classic case of the opposite.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Marine Safety Bill. In doing so, I point out that the Goss State Government inherited a cumbersome and unnecessarily regulated maritime industry in which maritime safety was weighed down by misdirected regulations and the out-of-date and overly complex Queensland Marine Act 1958. The Bill before the House will improve the administrative efficiency and put Queensland at the forefront of marine safety in Australia. To begin with, the archaic Queensland Marine Act 1958, to which I referred, will be repealed altogether. This Bill starts afresh. It will enhance maritime safety and end the out-of-date and overburdened approaches of the past.

The old maritime safety problems were: firstly, there was the problem of fragmentation and uncertainty caused by the old legislation dividing administrative responsibilities between the Maritime Board—a statutory board—and the Department of Transport; and, secondly, that administrative fragmentation seriously affected the public accountability required of all modern administrations, particularly in Queensland since the Fitzgerald inquiry. In place of that mess which we inherited, this Bill will provide for Queensland a safe, more efficient and effective marine industry with a high degree of self-regulation. That is a crucial point, and it represents a significant change from the past. I will return to that point in some detail in a moment.

I should point out that, contrary to the implication of the Opposition spokesman, in the preparation of this legislation there has been

extensive consultation with users, the industry and Government agencies.

Mr Hamill: It's been going on for years.

Mr BEATTIE: I take that interjection from the Minister, because that is a relevant point. The Bill puts safety responsibilities properly on the participants in the maritime industry, but at the same time enables designers and builders of ships and boats to pursue innovative ideas, no longer restrained by overcomplex, out-of-date regulations. However, there will be no compromise on safety. The Bill imposes a general safety obligation on the builders, designers, surveyors, owners and masters of ships, boats and other watercraft. This obligation will be achieved through a set of standards prepared by the chief executive of the Department of Transport. Those standards will be prepared as part of a process of public and industry consultation and will be reviewed regularly.

I want to deal now with the central point of my contribution; that is, the general safety obligation. I support strongly the concept of a general safety obligation as proposed in the Bill. Presently, there are over 120 000 vessels registered in Queensland, and many more than that use our waters. That figure is increasing by 4 000 a year and includes vessel transfers from other States. The ship-building industry, along with many other industries, is set to flourish in Queensland, and it is the Government's role to encourage that industry by removing regulatory constraints and minimising costs to industry.

I am always amused when I consider the legacy of the past—the former National Party and National Party/Liberal Party Governments, which talked so much about free enterprise and encouragement of industry, yet in the shipping area those Governments administered the most overburdensome regulations one could possibly imagine. Talk about putting a dampener on incentives and innovation! That is exactly what those Governments did. That legislation has been around since 1958 when the National Party came to power, and there had been no major change in the maritime safety area until this legislation was introduced by the Minister.

Mr Johnson: There won't be any with this, either.

Mr BEATTIE: If I had the track record that members opposite have had since 1958, I would not become too excited.

Mr Barton: He only knows about ships of the desert.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed. The Queensland maritime industry and the boating public have demonstrated their responsibility to marine safety. This point is worth considering. In 1992-93, Queensland, with 119 000 registered vessels, had only 118 reported accidents. The maritime industry has proven that it does not need the significant cost burden of annual Government inspections of vessels and equipment. To his credit, the Minister for Transport sees opportunities for Queensland in a new and flexible approach—an approach that is innovative in Australia. That is the thrust of the legislation. Let me say very clearly that it is long overdue.

As previously mentioned, the fundamental concept of this new legislative approach is to impose a general safety obligation on ship designers, ship builders, marine surveyors, ship owners and operators, ship masters and crews, and pilots. The Bill provides industry with a choice on how to meet its general safety obligations. Retaining the option of a full vessel survey provides for those who feel comfortable with the prescriptive process currently in place and also for others in industry who may occasionally need such an approach to satisfy a client's special requirements. The alternative, however—and this is the cornerstone of the new approach—provides for people who wish to meet their safety obligations in a performance-based manner and operate at the leading edge of technology and innovation. There is always the opportunity to address a marine safety issue in another way, and this Bill provides that opportunity—an opportunity supported by the industry.

I believe that this initiative is set to save the maritime industry and the boating public considerable time and money and will encourage the industry to be innovative and adaptive to advances in technology. In recent times, Australia has become more innovative when it comes to technology. One of the sad legacies of the past is that we have not perhaps taken as much advantage of new technologies and innovations as we could have. To some extent, this approach in this Bill takes up and overcomes those problems. The approach adopted in the Bill will leave no-one in doubt as to what is expected in meeting safety obligations. That is important.

The safety standards referred to by the Minister will be set out clearly, and the boating public and the marine industry will be able to choose whether they wish to follow prescriptive guidelines or develop alternative methods for complying with those standards. The way the general safety obligation applies to ship designers and builders and maritime surveyors is through the provision in the Bill for the issue of certificates of compliance by those persons certifying the safety and seaworthiness of the

vessel. Where it is found that incorrect declarations are made—particularly where such occurrences contribute to a maritime accident, injury or death—accredited persons will be liable to severe penalties. Similarly, there are severe penalties for ship owners and operators who, through random audits or other means, are found not to be meeting their safety obligations. Random audits, which are very useful means of ensuring safety standards, will be conducted.

I commend the Minister for his introduction of this Bill, which acknowledges the constructive contribution to be made to maritime safety by the Queensland maritime industry and the boating public. Through both the industry consultative council, to be set up under this Bill, and the process set down for preparing standards, the Queensland maritime industry and boating public will be able to have input into safety standards—something that is long overdue. I believe that the Maritime Safety Bill, with its emphasis on a general safety obligation, provides for the introduction of greater self-regulation within the maritime industry. This will encourage greater flexibility and innovation for those actively participating in the industry, while still maintaining an appropriate and sustainable balance between maritime safety and economic development. It is a fine balance; it is an important balance, but it is a balance that is achieved in this legislation.

The port of Brisbane—and I want to make quick general reference to this in my concluding remarks—gives a clear indication why flexibility and self-regulation for the maritime industry is necessary. The enormous growth in exports through the port of Brisbane that has been taking place is not only an indication of the growth of Queensland but also the growth of the maritime industry. Trade figures for the seven months to the end of January 1994 show that Brisbane remains on target for another record export year. Both total tonnages and container throughput are up significantly on last year. Total throughput for the port has increased by 14.9 per cent to 9 724 000 tonnes. Total imports are up by 16.8 per cent to 5 118 490 tonnes. Exports have risen by 12.8 per cent to 4 605 550 tonnes. There has been a 3.1 per cent increase in coal exports and a 20.3 per cent increase in oil exports, which represents a significant boost in export tonnages for that period. Container trade rose by 6.2 per cent during the past year, in line with the forecast growth of 6 per cent. Imports are up 5.6 per cent to 62 932 TEUs, which are 20 foot equivalent unit containers. Exports rose 6.7 per cent to 65 226 TEUs.

What we see is a very impressive track record for the port of Brisbane. I know my honourable colleague from Mundingburra will say positive things about the significant increase in export tonnages from Townsville as well, which also is a very important story to be told. It shows that we are playing a greater export role in our region. Only recently, the Minister and three of his parliamentary colleagues, including the honourable member for Mundingburra—and I will be referring to this in the Adjournment debate a little later—visited New Guinea, and we took the opportunity to inspect the facilities in the port of Lae and to see evidence of the increasing trade that is taking place between Townsville and Papua New Guinea. Obviously, there is also a Brisbane input into that export trade, so what we are seeing is a greater role for the port of Brisbane. I have to say that as the member for Brisbane Central, I am delighted with that greater role being played by the port of Brisbane and, because it will provide the maritime industry not only with the important ability to self-regulate, but also enable a greater degree of flexibility to take advantage of technology and to be more innovative in its approach, I am delighted that this legislation is being debated today. It will be good for the maritime industry, good for the port of Brisbane and good for Queensland as a whole.

Mr GRICE (Broadwater) (5.02 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker——

Mr Beattie: Who are you going to drop a bucket on today?

Mr GRICE: I have a personal philosophical view that Governments should get out of the business of regulation.

Mr Veivers: Your bucket had a hole in it.

Mr GRICE: Yes, it did not work.

I have always believed that Governments in this country interfere far too much in the way citizens go about their business and private activities. A great many Government regulatory regimes are unnecessary and thus offensive, but I would be failing the people of Broadwater and every citizen of Queensland if I supported the Marine Safety Bill. Certainly, it provides a measure of deregulation. Certainly, it provides for self-regulation on the part of the boat building and maintenance industry and the operators of craft. Usually, I would approve of such legislation, but the Bill that the Minister has brought before the House is fatally flawed. I have no doubt that it will lead to needless deaths at sea, and that will happen because of the Minister's naive belief that everyone will do the right thing. In a perfect world, that would be the case, but we do not live in a perfect world.

This legislation has been touted as promoting marine safety. It will have the very opposite effect.

Mr Beattie: How?

Mr GRICE: The member should listen carefully; if he does, he will learn something.

The only winner will be the Government, which wants to abrogate the prime responsibility of any Government, that is, the responsibility for public safety. It has already done that with respect to law and order and now it wants to do it again with respect to marine safety. A Government that has no interest in public safety fails the people of the State. With this legislation, the Government is failing to ensure the personal safety of the people of Queensland, and with that failure comes an unacceptable risk to the tourism industry, which is so important to our State economy.

There is no excuse for introducing this legislation. Similar measures have been tried elsewhere and they have been found wanting. The Goss Labor Government should not put Queenslanders at risk by following prescriptions which have failed elsewhere.

Mr Beattie: Where?

Mr GRICE: Honourable members will recall news coverage of the sinking of the Marchioness in the Thames in the heart of London—that is where. The operators of that vessel had taken advantage of the same type of regulatory regime that Labor wants to impose on Queensland, and innocent people paid for it with their lives. The sinking of that rotten hulk was the final straw in Great Britain's flirtation with deregulation in this vitally important sphere.

An example of this craziness can be found even closer to home. This Government's comrades in Victoria tried the same nonsense in the mid 1980s. The workers' paradise decided to walk away from a regulatory regime for the same reason underlying the Queensland move—to save money for spending on pet social engineering and to avoid responsibility in the case of disaster. In Victoria, the deregulation applied to the professional fishing fleet, and there was a series of disasters as financially pressed fishermen took short cuts. People died, and in spite of that, Labor wants to do the same thing in Queensland. It wants to walk away from its responsibility for ensuring as far as possible the safety of the citizens of this State.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister emphasised that this legislation resulted from extensive consultation with everyone concerned with marine safety. I have to say that I have not been able to find even one boat designer or builder who will back up the Minister's claim—and I know plenty of those people quite well. What I am given to understand is that there has been a great deal of opposition from the designers and builders, and I am told that there is opposition even from the professionals in the department. It seems clear from my discussions that the impetus for the change has been the Government's unwillingness to accept responsibility for maritime safety. It prefers to cut its own costs rather than ensure the safety of those of the State's citizens and visitors who take to the water. It wants to walk away from responsibility and liability.

I now challenge the Minister to table in the House details of the consultations he supposedly had with the industry. If he is fair dinkum, he will let the House see for itself the industry responses to his proposals. He will also table all the advice received from the few professionals in marine safety still employed in his department. I am talking about the professionals, not the politically appointed policy advisers such as Bill Upton, who was imported from Canberra especially for this exercise and who has no experience in marine safety. I am prepared to bet that very little documentation will be tabled because the Government will not want to reveal what the experts really think.

In proposing these changes, the Goss Labor Government is going in exactly the opposite direction to that of the Federal Government. Of course, it is not just the Canberra model that the Goss Labor Government has turned its back on; it has taken the opposite course from that embraced increasingly all over the world. Specifically, it is flouting the move to increased safety regulation by the International Maritime Organisation. I find it ironic that a Labor Party Government is prepared to go against the IMO convention. It must be remembered that when Labor wants to implement some outrage here, mandated by a foreign body, it cites our international treaty obligations. Labor is pulling the same stunt now in trying to force the Tasmanian Government to bow to the gay lobby. If it is good enough for the gays, what about our own citizens who want nothing more than to be able to go to sea in some sort of safety?

As I said a moment ago, the Goss Labor Government is not even taking any notice of the national body. The Australian Maritime Safety Agency is striving for greater safety regulation. It recognises the special dangers to life which are involved in any journey on the water. Just about any malfunction on a boat has the potential to cause loss of life. If our car or motorcycle breaks down, we are not necessarily in danger. If a marine engine stops or a steering gear becomes unserviceable or a boat catches fire, there is potentially great danger to all aboard. Rescue is rarely fast or very easy. The dangers increase by a huge margin when remoteness or bad weather are factors.

That is why the national regulators take a properly serious view of design, building, maintenance and operating standards. They insist on proper standards backed by effective enforcement measures. In contrast, Queensland is to rely on a set of standards to which people may or may not adhere of their own choice. Instead of a sensible system of preventative regulation, this Goss Labor Government has decided that it will settle for sorting out the messes after they have happened. It has decided to make the coroner the referee. That is just not good enough for the people of Queensland or for me as their representative.

I will not support this Bill. I will fight for sensible regulations properly enforced by competent professionals when my party returns to Government. Foolish measures such as those contained in this Bill only serve to bring that day closer.

The heart of this legislation is accreditation. That is where it will fail, and when it fails, it will result in the loss of lives. A boat builder who gets the nod for accreditation will be able to build whatever he likes and sign it off as being safe to take to sea. An accredited boat builder will have no need for plan approval and no need for survey during the building or before the boat goes into operation. The accredited builder is given almost God-like powers over the destinies of the people who will sail in the vessel that he builds.

In a perfect world, that might work. Every builder would be skilled and conscientious and paranoid about safety. There are few builders in Queensland who could be relied upon to fall into that category. The industry tells me—and I have personal knowledge of the industry as well—that there are only five or six builders currently in Queensland who everyone acknowledges are capable of building boats, unsupervised, for passenger operations. There are just five or six builders in whom we can have absolute faith with respect to passenger boat construction. In spite of that, the industry is confident that there will be five or six times that number of accreditations at least. The implications are obvious.

The industry, including those very good builders who should be accredited, has the shivers about those implications. Not one of the boat builders I talk to wants to see an end to sensible regulation. Certainly they see a need for update in some areas, but they still want reassurance that their work will be checked by experts from time to time while a boat is under construction. Because they believe in safety, they want as many expert eyes as possible. I am told that the really good operators, for example, the bigger operators in the tourism industry, also fear deregulation and the ability of an operator to certify that his craft is fully seaworthy. Many of these people survived the financial disasters of the past decade and know only too well that financial pressures can lead to the cutting of corners with respect to safety. Those reputable operators want compulsory surveys each year before a boat can be reregistered. That applies particularly when a boat is to be used for passenger operations or fishing charters.

I know that parts of the fishing industry believe that owners and skippers should be able to certify their own vessels as suitable for registration. I am prepared to concede that fishing boats and those used for private purposes could be deregulated to a large degree. At the end of the day, the owners can make their own choices about their personal level of safety. But I will concede nothing of the kind when it comes to those vessels that carry passengers. We can never compromise when it comes to public safety. Of course, the owners of private boats or fishing vessels can look for survey certificates, and I hope they will do so. I would certainly be reluctant to sail on a boat without properly issued certification that it is safe to operate for its intended purpose.

One of the most worrying aspects of this Bill is the provision that all survey certificates will be issued by the private marine surveyors, who will, of course, charge for their services. I have no wish to cast aspersions on the integrity of every private marine surveyor in the State. It takes too much of a leap of faith, however, to believe that every surveyor can be counted upon to do the right thing. Yet we have to hope that they do, because the life of everyone who takes a boat trip will ultimately depend on how well and honestly those people do their jobs. I am not being overly cynical when I forecast that some will not do the right thing. Of course, some will do the wrong thing. At the very least, private surveyors will be under pressure to get the job done and move on to another. They will be asked to rush jobs, and when an important job is rushed it can easily be done badly. Things will be missed and lives will be imperilled as a result.

In the worst case scenario, certificates will be issued without the benefit of any inspection or testing at all. There will be favours for mates and favours for relatives; there will be favours for people who pay for them. If members think that is impossible, I invite them to have a look at what has happened in New South Wales with compulsory annual inspections for motor vehicle registration. Is there anyone in this House who has not heard of the shonky pink slips that can arrive in the mail? In the case of a car, a few hundred dollars is at stake for the owner. In the case of a charter boat or larger capacity cruise

boat in the tourism industry, there could be half a million dollars at stake. That would be very tempting for an operator sailing close to the wind financially. We can all think of that scenario.

What about a cruise boat operated by a company that is only just surviving? A transmission problem is clearly on the way, but to take the boat out of the water for repairs means a lot of lost income at the height of the season. The temptation will be to get a few more weeks in the water before doing the job. The answer is to hold back the survey or to postdate a report. That makes economic sense, but it fails the people whose lives are put at risk. Members cannot say that will not happen. They just do not know that, and that is the point. The Labor Goss Government is prepared to take the risk and let the coroner sort it out later.

The abrogation of responsibility for survey to private operators will also lead to greatly increased costs for boat owners. That means less willingness to have inspections made. At the moment, inspection for registration renewal costs around $800 for a 15-metre vessel. The costs of survey by a departmental officer make up around $300 of that cost. A private surveyor will cost anything from $50 to $80 an hour. It does not take long to go past $300, and well beyond it.

The silver lining in the cloud of the private survey system is that the surveyors will realise they could be held legally liable for disasters which befall boats they have certified. In some cases, private marine surveyors will be very tough indeed, and the owners of those boats will at least know they have safe craft. The downside is that those surveyors will soon have a reputation which will keep all but the most safety conscious owners away from them.

If the Government insists on placing the vital inspection and certification role in private hands, it should insist on proper levels of public liability insurance. When the disasters occur, the victims must have effective redress. I note that the New South Wales authorities carry $200m in such cover, so at least when a coroner or a board of inquiry finds culpability there is a capacity to pay adequate compensation. A private surveyor carrying only $2m or so will not be worth suing if a boat he has certified is involved in a disaster.

The Government has already begun to destroy the ability of departmental professionals to keep a realistic eye on standards within the area of maritime construction and operation. The professional staffing in that area has already fallen to only 13 people, and the majority of them are said not to be available for the job they were employed to do. Some are away on other duties and have not been replaced. Others are involved in policy work or the preparation of regulations to accompany this dubious legislation. The end result, according to the industry, is that there is now a huge backlog of work, and the industry is suffering.

The industry takes the view that this situation has been created deliberately by the Minister's political appointees in the departmental bureaucracy. I am told that this has been done in order to show that the old system could no longer cope and that this legislation was necessary. The industry is also convinced that planned departures will mean that no more than nine or 10 of those professionals will be available for work as inspectors under the new system to prevail in the future. That situation is a recipe for disasters at sea. Many people had hoped that there would still be real recourse to a proper inspection procedure and, indeed, the Bill purports to provide that recourse. But if the inspectors are not available, or if they are overloaded with work, then that option is not realistically available. We should remember that, in the future, it will be those very inspectors who will be diverted to the production of standards and other regulatory material.

There is simply no need for this legislation. There is nothing basically wrong with the system that it will replace. All that has been wrong lately is the serious underresourcing which this Labor Goss Government has imposed on the existing regulatory regime. Queensland has almost 4 000 vessels on its register—far and away more than any other State. By and large, those vessels have been in acceptable condition due to the regulations and the enforcement prevailing here until recently. That system looked to prevent problems as far as possible, right from the time a boat was designed, through its build period, and yearly through its working life. It will be replaced by one giving open slather to people who will put money before safety. It will also be a system which asks the coroner to be the arbiter—after the event—of the way self-regulation works in a vital area of public safety.

This Bill highlights the failure of the Goss Labor Government to take its proper responsibilities seriously. It is a disgrace and, as I have said, I will seek proper reregulation when the coalition is returned to Government next year.

Debate, on motion of Mr Davies, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (5.19 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Australian Labor Party, Townsville

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (5.19 p.m.): The past few weeks have seen what could well be the beginning of the end of ALP dominance in the Townsville region. That area is represented by a Federal Labor member who has little respect for the Goss style of government and who has been consistently ignored by the ALP hierarchy in Canberra; a Left Wing senator who has a political philosophy based on trying to make everyone equal at the bottom of the barrel, except for radical Aboriginals; three Labor State members, who appear to have been promoted to various heights in inverse proportion to their ability; and a Labor city council that holds power only by default of lethargy. The demise of Labor in Cairns along with the personal disaster of the Premier's mate Mike Bailey in Mulgrave was topped only by the unmitigated ALP debacle—to use the member for Thuringowa's words—in the Thuringowa election.

To the south the people of Bowen firmly rejected the former Left Wing ALP State member Ken Smyth, who has now notched up three straight losses on the trot, and tossed out the ALP in Collinsville, of all places. In Thuringowa, Mayor Les Tyrell out-polled an Independent Labor rival three to one—a situation that would have been the same had Alderman Tony Mooney not read the tea leaves in time and hastily backed out of the twin city amalgamation plans.

On 29 March 1994, the *Townsville Bulletin* carried a story headed "Labor Member Blasts His Party" and reported on the fact that Mr Ken McElligott said that the Thuringowa result was a disaster for the ALP, which ran five endorsed candidates and did not win a place on the council. The Thuringowa team leader, Pat Thompson, was quoted as saying Mr McElligott could have done more by helping before the election instead of criticising afterwards. What a happy little band they are!

The very next day, Mr McElligott seized the front page of the *Townsville Bulletin* again by stating that he might quit over the local government merger issue. In his statement, the member for Thuringowa said his conscience may not allow him to represent the people of Thuringowa. The manner in which his party has ignored his wisdom over the shop trading issue is a disgrace and must also weigh heavily on its conscience. In the story, Mr McElligott indicated that he might challenge another sitting member for preselection. "Why not? It's a democracy," he said. The member for Townsville, Geoff Smith, went into a predictable tail spin and denied yet again that he will soon retire—a wish shared by thousands throughout the State and most certainly many within the Labor caucus. The member for Mundingburra, Ken Davies, said he did "not want to comment on the issue". I bet he did not. Here we have a member who has a conscience, a member who will not retire, and a member who will not comment. So out come the party faithful, the backstabbers, and the heavies to stamp on that conscience.

State ALP secretary, Mike Kaiser, warned McElligott on page one of the *Townsville Bulletin* that challenges were "not on" and said that party members would view any such attempt "pretty dimly". Trade union official Terry Gillman was first to put up his hand for Ken's seat and, while he declared Mr McElligott to be a good bloke, obviously has his union machinery in gear ready to run over the top of the same good bloke. Meanwhile, elder spokesman Geoff Smith was making mini-decisions and still denying the wish of all sides of politics and business to do a bunk.

Delma Benson, a four-term ALP alderman on the Townsville City Council was not so reticent. She said not only should Ken quit but he was by inference a miser, a rorter, a failed Minister and caucus member, and a person who might have his endorsement taken off him anyway and suggested that resignation was too much to hope for—good party girl that Delma. Other letters were equally cruel and cutting in respect of the actions of the member for Thuringowa. The final act in part one of the ALP Townsville/Thuringowa funeral procession came on 7 September 1993 when the member for Thuringowa wrote to the editor stating the obvious—that he would probably not be a candidate in Thuringowa in the next election. Mr McElligott has reason to be bitter. He and his wonderful wife, Shirley, have been honest and consistent at least. One of the only competent Ministers since the advent of the Goss Government has been left to wither on the back bench while watching the level of incompetency on the front bench plumb new depths. Lately, Mr McElligott has supported the rail workers and other traditional battlers, but for his trouble he has been backstabbed by the party at every level and deserted by his parliamentary colleagues in Brisbane. My advice to Ken is to go while he is still free of the stench of a party not worthy of his integrity. The Delma Bensons, Wayne Gosses, and Mike Kaisers are simply not worthy of his talents and he will be well rid of them all.

Mount Gravatt and District Neighbourhood Centre

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (5.25 p.m.): This evening I wish to draw to the attention of the

House one of the most positive achievements that has occurred in my electorate of Mount Gravatt over the past four years. I intend to detail some of the good work that has been achieved at the Mount Gravatt and District Neighbourhood Centre. The establishment of a neighbourhood centre is certainly an example of the achievements being undertaken by this Government in its day-to-day decision making.

When I was elected to Parliament in 1989 the Mount Gravatt area had no neighbourhood centre. Although well serviced by Federal Government departments, the area lacked its own community centre where individuals with problems could seek help, where courses could be conducted, where interested people could meet, and where people of all ethnic, religious and political persuasions could feel part of the community. After identifying this need for a community-based centre, I organised a group of local community leaders in 1990—and I am pleased to add that the member for Mansfield, Ms Laurel Power, was part of that group—and formed a working group to make a submission for such a centre. The group's untiring effort led by their chairperson, Ms Bernadette Dawson, successfully applied for State Government funding, found a premises along Logan Road and established a centre which today stands by bus stop 40. On behalf of the management committee, I extend its appreciation to the Minister for Family Services, the Honourable Anne Warner, who opened the centre in 1991 and who has always shown a willingness to accept representations from the centre and follow their progress. As patron of the neighbourhood centre, I am proud of its achievements and follow its progress closely.

Since its inception, the neighbourhood centre has developed a variety of programs. A domestic violence support group has given support and advice to women in domestic violence situations. A Sole Parent Expo run in conjunction with Job Education Training and Social Security has provided information and advice to sole parents. Men's and women's health seminars have been conducted as have baby-sitting courses that have also taught parenting skills to teenage boys and girls. Ongoing groups are run regularly at the centre including playgroups five days a week, a senior citizens group, a legal advice session by appointment and conversational English classes for migrants. The centre also provides emergency relief money, and a thrift shop operating at the centre sells clothing and other goods cheaply to disadvantaged groups.

One of the programs to which the staff at the centre is presently devoting their time and energy is the establishment of a senior citizens activity hall to cater for the needs of the elderly—a targeted group in need in the community. In addition, the centre will soon be working in earnest on another important program to assist the elderly in the Mount Gravatt/Holland Park area. This has come about because the centre has recently been chosen as a successful applicant to establish the Home Assist program in the Mount Gravatt/Holland Park area. The Home Assist program is a new Government initiative which provides information, advice and some direct assistance with home maintenance, repairs and modifications for older people and people with disabilities who are homeowners or private renters. The home advice will take the form of a Home Checklist Book that will provide free information about the maintenance and repair of a home and ways of making it safer. The direct assistance will help with home and garden maintenance and repairs for people who are unable to obtain alternative assistance. The home inspection will consist of an advisory inspection of a home to help plan ahead for work needing to be done. This program will benefit many of the elderly residents in my electorate who are unable to maintain their homes adequately and in so doing it will help the elderly to remain in their homes, which might not have been a possibility without this program. I am extremely pleased that the Government has recognised the need for this service in my electorate and I am sure that, with the centre's past history of service delivery, this program will achieve the goals of the program.

In conclusion, I would stress that community centres such as this could not achieve their worthwhile objectives without the hard, unpaid efforts of their volunteers. The volunteers continue to ensure that the centre is a vibrant place of activity. I would like to place on public record my appreciation to just a few of the unsung heroes who have given four years of dedicated service. They are Bernadette Dawson, the committee president—truly a remarkable person who has thrown all her time and energy into the service for the past four years—and June Holz, Angela Latimer, Lyn Shellshear and Dannielle Buchanan who have helped her along the way.

Finally, I congratulate this Government on recognising that the capital and recurrent expenditure which goes into funding centres such as this throughout the State of Queensland is money well spent. While the press and Opposition continue to highlight the social failures produced by our society, little attention is given to that which is positive. Like other members of Parliament, much of my time is spent

with community organisations that are working daily with the needy and dispossessed and turning society's failures into successes. Those organisations do not get much attention but their work does not go unnoticed.

Time expired.

Professional Officers Association Superannuation Fund

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.30 p.m.): Today, I wish to revisit the POA Superannuation Fund fiasco and again urge the Attorney-General to better fulfil his responsibilities in relation to this issue than he has done to date.

Pursuant to the release of the eighth report of the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation, which was an inquiry into the QPOA Superannuation Fund, the Senate Select Committee recommended that the Queensland Attorney-General, Dean Wells, investigate the case of the missing documents.

Since then, the Government has been burying its head in the sand by saying that the documents are missing. But is the Government, through its Ministers, really trying hard enough? In the Opposition's view, clearly it is not.

Today, I urge the Government to look at all the possible and potential sources that may supply the necessary information just in case all of the missing documents have been destroyed. Three sources may well be worth looking at, including, firstly, taxation records at the Taxation Office; secondly, the personal superannuation plans of the individuals; and, thirdly, the personal taxation records of the individuals.

Circumstantial evidence indicates that the extraordinary withdrawals that benefited Mr Donald Martindale, Miss Roz Kinder, Mr Kerry Daly and Mr Gordon Rutherford, and an increase in payment to Mr Buchanan, were contrary to the trust deed and paid little regard to the fiduciary duties of the trustees. Information presented to the Senate select committee and other documentation make it apparent that inconsistencies exist.

For instance, a letter dated 20 August 1987, signed by Mr Martindale and addressed to National Mutual Life Assurance, requested an increase from 20 per cent to 50 per cent of the employer's accumulated funds for Mr Buchanan. The trust did not allow for a 50 per cent payment to all. However, at an important meeting of the trustees of the POA superannuation scheme, a resolution was passed to increase Mr Buchanan's benefit to 50 per cent. The same Mr Martindale told the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation that—

> "As the Trustees were also on the QPOA Executive, no separate meetings were held or minutes kept by the Trustees."

Many questions arise from this evidence. Were all decisions relating to the POA super fund made at QPOA Executive meetings? This then raises the question: by what authority was the letter to National Mutual from Mr Martindale dated 20 August 1987 authorised? Other interesting questions that need to be asked are as follows: at which meeting was this decision made? If it was at a QPOA Executive meeting, did the other two trustees, Messrs Lee and Higham, specifically give their approval, and is it documented? On whose authority did Martindale write that letter to NML? If this Labor Government believed in true accountability, then a full and thorough investigation into the POA super affair would be undertaken.

There is more evidence to suggest that the POA super affair contains other glaring inconsistencies. Mr Martindale told the Senate Select Committee into Superannuation that he had little knowledge of superannuation or understanding of the trust deed. It seems strange that a book produced by the Queensland Professional Officers Association on the superannuation plan was given to staff and eligible employees. This book explained in simple terms the conditions of the POA superannuation fund. Mr Martindale must have known of the existence of this book both in his capacity as a trustee of the fund and as the general secretary of the Professional Officers Association. When one reads this document it is evident that any reasonable person could understand it. It states that to receive a benefit the following conditions had to be met: first, cease employment—resign; second, retire—attain the age of 55; and third, become incapacitated—disabled.

Although the four beneficiaries, Martindale, Kinder, Daly and Rutherford, fit many other categories, they fitted none of those categories, yet they received more than their entitlements from the employer's accumulation fund. By taking more than their entitlements, there is now a shortfall in the fund of $30,304. How can it be denied that the trustees knew little of or did not understand superannuation when they produced a book for members and intending members? The union produces a book and the trustees do not know what is in it, and yet they are the same persons? How can this be? Mr Martindale was general secretary of the POA from February 1983 to November 1990. The book was distributed between 1985 and 1988, at the same time as the extraordinary withdrawals took place. This matter is of great importance and must be resolved immediately and with far

greater zeal than the Government is demonstrating.

However, the funny business does not stop there. We now discover that two people, one of whom was a sacked organiser who gave evidence to the Senate committee, have both suffered at the hands of the credit union. One was refused membership for unstated reasons; the other had his membership terminated on the basis that he was ineligible, despite being a member for three years after his dismissal. I have little doubt that many other current credit union members are equally ineligible.

The Goss Government has made a virtue of open and accountable government. It rose to Government on the coat-tails of that virtue, yet it allows a smell to pollute the air of this House and the public service without demanding that real questions are answered by high-ranking public officials, let alone asking Ministers to get off their tails and actually pursue the recommendations of a Senate select committee. The real truth is that the Government wants to maintain a buffer between itself and the funny business associated with the dismissal of a union official. That touches at the heart of the Goss Government. The public awaits its answers, and the Opposition hopes that they are forthcoming in the near future.

Papua New Guinea

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (5.35 p.m.): Between 1 and 5 March 1994, the Transport Minister, David Hamill, led a delegation to Port Moresby to sign an historic agreement between the Papua New Guinea and the Queensland Transport Departments. The agreement formalised closer relations between the two departments in developing better transport systems and infrastructure. It is the first time an agreement has been signed between the PNG Government and an Australian State Government department. Mr Hamill's visit was the forerunner of a number of Queensland ministerial visits to Papua New Guinea over following weeks by Ministers Comben, Casey, Smith, Elder and, indeed, by the Premier later this month.

This heightened activity between Queensland and Papua New Guinea reflects the growing importance of trade between Queensland and Papua New Guinea. In fact, the Premier of Queensland, Mr Goss, who had previously visited Papua New Guinea, was the first Premier of Queensland to visit that country for over 100 years. That illustrates the commitment that this Government has to improved relations with Papua New Guinea, and it reflects badly on the previous Government. Last year, more than $264m——

Mr Elliott: I went to Papua New Guinea.

Mr BEATTIE: The member is not the Premier, and never will be. Last year, Queensland's exports to Papua New Guinea were worth more than $264m. Mr Hamill's signing of the Partners in Progress Agreement with the Papua New Guinea Transport Minister, Mr Roy Yaki, will provide even better commercial opportunities for Queensland. Thirty-one per cent of the total trade between Australia and Papua New Guinea is generated by Queensland, and the Queensland Government is doing everything it can to see this percentage increase.

The background to the agreement signed by Minister David Hamill last month began in September 1992, when the Queensland Government conducted a trade mission to Papua New Guinea as part of its business cooperation agreement with the Government of PNG. As a result, in recent times, a number of PNG delegations have visited Queensland to further cement the important relationship between PNG and Queensland.

Queensland's major exports to Papua New Guinea include petroleum and related items, manufactured metals, iron and steel, machinery for particular industries, general industrial machinery, electrical machinery, meat and meat preparations, cereals and cereal preparations, non-metallic minerals, road vehicles, transport equipment, miscellaneous manufactured articles, animal feedstuffs, beverages and tobacco, inorganic chemicals, fertiliser, power-generated machinery, transport equipment, and a range of miscellaneous items. A number of special transactions also occurred.

Mr Hamill was accompanied on his visit by two members of his parliamentary transport committee, Ken Davies, the member for Mundingburra and me, as well as the member for Cook, Mr Steve Bredhauer, whose electorate is the closest part of Australia to Papua New Guinea. I will digress and say that during the first official press club dinner that was held in PNG, which the Minister addressed, during question time the honourable Steve Bredhauer fielded a question. That was a little bit like a backbencher receiving a question in this House. I have to say that although the question came out of left field, Steve Bredhauer handled it very well.

I last visited Papua New Guinea 21 years ago, prior to self-Government in 1973. PNG achieved independence in 1975. In 1994, I found an interesting contrast between pre-independent Papua New Guinea and that of today. In fact, I had a brother who lived and worked there for 13 years. Too often, we in

Australia hear unfortunate stories about excessive crime rates and rascal gangs operating in PNG. Perhaps there is not enough appreciation in this country of the maturing process that has taken place in PNG since 1975.

As its closest neighbour, we have both strategic and business reasons to continue to develop a closer relationship with PNG. More and more small to medium businesses are starting to see PNG as an important first step in developing a capacity to trade on the world market. That is advantageous and of mutual benefit to both PNG and Queensland. Australia's past colonial involvement and the widespread use of English in PNG, as well as PNG's close geographical proximity, make trade with PNG a logical first step for many businesses that are considering expansion.

I found that many of the tensions that may have existed between Australia, as a former colonial power, and the new, emerging PNG had largely disappeared. The PNG Government appears keen to foster a closer trading relationship with Australia, which will be mutually beneficial to both countries. That has particular and special benefit to Queensland because of its proximity to PNG. Townsville and Cairns are only a short flight from Port Moresby, and there are regular shipping services to PNG, particularly out of Townsville.

Those former expatriates who once lived in New Guinea and who remember fondly its colonial past would be surprised to see the strength and maturity of the PNG Parliament and the high calibre and competence of PNG Ministers and senior bureaucrats. That is not to say that there are not problems, but it is an indication that there is a strong relationship between Queensland and Papua New Guinea. I congratulate the Minister on leading this delegation. As a member of it, I inform the members of this Parliament that I found it beneficial, educative and informative.

Time expired.

Tablelands, College of TAFE

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (5.40 p.m.): I rise to inform the Parliament of the need for an autonomous college of TAFE for the region of the tablelands. This is a matter that I have canvassed previously in this place, and it is a matter that has occupied my mind and some of my energies for the whole of the time that I have been a member of this Parliament. The tablelands area is currently serviced by both the Cairns College of TAFE and the Johnstone College of TAFE.

The Cairns college has an annex in Mareeba and one in Atherton. The best thing that I can say about that arrangement is that the effort expended by TAFE in those areas has been limited, underfunded and ad hoc. Any benefit from the arrangement has only been through the efforts, determination and goodwill of the people employed in the TAFE on the tablelands, and in spite of the best efforts of the hierarchy of the Cairns College of TAFE to stop it from achieving its goals.

The Johnstone college has shown some vigour and entrepreneurial flair, particularly in respect of Malanda and Ravenshoe, and has provided some good service. However, distance and the small number of people served has made it very difficult for these arrangements to be successful. Some 38 000 people live in that region. They are just as entitled to full access to TAFE services as anyone else. It is now time to fulfil those obligations.

In order to further those objectives, early in 1993 I called a meeting of interested persons. The meeting drew people from local shire councils, educational institutions—and that included the five high schools in the area—industry, Government departments and others. It was agreed by that group that an application ought to be made to the Office of Labour Market Adjustment for funding for an in-depth study into the region. The study was to determine the needs of the local community and industry for future and further education. Such funding was approved. The report that I will table in this House today is the result of that funding and the subsequent research from it. That research was funded to the tune of $20,000 by the Office of Labour Market Adjustment, for which I thank it.

There is now no question whatsoever that there is a case for a college of TAFE on the tablelands. That research has identified vast areas of need and gaping chasms in the existing provision of services. The people of the region are most certainly being disadvantaged by the lack of appropriate TAFE services.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee for its enthusiasm and support. I would like especially to thank and congratulate Councillor Ivan Searston of the Herberton Shire Council, the author of the report, for his magnificent contribution to the debate and to the report. I am aware that currently there is a move afoot to establish an institute of TAFE for far-north Queensland. I personally have some sympathy for that project. Recently, in Cairns, I had some discussions in respect of that matter with the incumbent Director of the Cairns College of TAFE, Myles Clacherty, who apparently understands the need for TAFE services in the remote areas of Queensland.

As I said, I have some sympathy for that project, but I do not yet fully understand how the tablelands would fit into that plan as an autonomous region or as an independent or an equal party to that partnership. To that end, I have convened a meeting of the original committee for next week to consider the plan in detail. That plan was put forward by Myles Clacherty and Coral Butcher, the Director of the Johnstone College of TAFE.

The outcome that I desire is a unique TAFE experience for the tablelands, with at least five learning centres, and with electronic learning as an integral part of the system. As I have said before in this place, I do not want millions of dollars spent on bricks and mortar. Rather, I want to use existing facilities, those being the existing high schools, the TAFE rooms and Government offices. These would all be linked together in a matrix, where learning is paramount and egos are not to be considered.

I gave copies of this report to both Ministers—the Minister for Education and the Minister responsible for TAFE. I trust that the Ministers and their staff will give full and due consideration—and, might I say, due credit—to the report, which is of a high quality. As I said, the document that I am about to table in this Parliament cost some $20,000. It is probably the most in-depth piece of research ever done into the tablelands region. It covers all kinds of things, including labour needs and the future needs for both hobby and vocational education. It is a document worthy of this Parliament, and it is certainly worthy of consideration.

Time expired.

Gladstone Port Authority

Mr BENNETT (Gladstone) (5.45 p.m.): The May 1993 findings of the Bureau of Industry Economics contained in report No. 47 stated that the lowest cost Australian coal port was 12 times costlier than the dearest overseas competitor. At best, anyone with a plain knowledge of port operations would say that these conclusions were reached by comparing like with unlike. Unfortunately, this inaccurate conclusion was reiterated by the *Australian Financial Review*, and in other major editorials. I believe that needs to be corrected in this House.

The report tars all ports with the same brush and fails to point out that the handling by Queensland ports of Australia's No. 1 export earner, coal, is done at world's best practice standards. The Gladstone Port Authority conducted a study and compared its performance with that of the Port of Richards Bay in South Africa. Richards Bay was similar to Gladstone with respect to products handled and port management. It is the world's largest coal terminal, shipping around 45 million tonnes of coal per annum. Gladstone ships approximately 20 million tonnes of coal annually. It was found that the all-up cost of shipping a tonne of coal from Gladstone compared favourably with the costs at Richards Bay. In particular, charges under the control of the port authority where extremely competitive. Indeed, the cost forecasts are that Gladstone will be cheaper than Richards Bay within three years, despite the difference in the economies of scale.

Gladstone Port Authority charges at Gladstone, including handling charges, are 18 per cent higher per tonne than at Richards Bay. This includes a harbour deepening charge, which ceases in three years. This charge relates to a specific channel deepening which is financed by the Gladstone Port Authority. At Richards Bay, such works were directly funded by the South African Government. That is a point that should be remembered by the newspapers and the Bureau of Industry Economics in their reports. When the deepening charge expires, based on current values, the Gladstone Port Authority cost per tonne will be 2 per cent below that of Richards Bay. Economies of scale would cause an even greater reduction in charges at Gladstone, where charges have declined continually as the volume throughput accelerates.

The misinformation, as published by the bureau, would deter prospective overseas investors and potential overseas buyers of Queensland products. In many ways, Queensland port authorities now operate in accordance with world best practice. It is about time that the Australian Government agencies informed the world of the true situation. However, instead of dealing with the facts, Federal agencies such as the Industry Commission, the Trade Practices Commission and the Prices Surveillance Authority continue their superficial witch-hunts. The Bureau of Industry Economics, through the Association of Australian Port and Marine Authorities, has been informed of the methodology used in the study. The bureau would do well to raise its gauge beyond statistical print-outs and spend time at Gladstone's publicly owned facilities to observe its operations.

The Gladstone Port Authority's Clinton coal facility is the only exporting terminal in the world to be operated by a public statutory authority. All of the experts say that this terminal, which next year will become the largest single coal exporting terminal in Australia and the third largest in the

world, can be better run by private enterprise. None of today's experts have been able to produce one shred of evidence to justify this philosophical mind-set. These people who lay snug in their beds in Canberra at 3 o'clock in the morning have no understanding of the detrimental impact that they have on the morale of the dedicated Gladstone coal terminal staff, who are loading and despatching ships at world best practice standards as enthusiastically at 3 o'clock in the morning as they do all day.

The bureau's statement refers specifically to the cost of tugboats. The Gladstone Port Authority study showed that, for a coal ship loading 120 000 tonnes, the cost of the services at Gladstone are 1.75 times higher than at Richards Bay—not eight times higher, as the report states. This cost difference relates to the fact that some 40 kilometres of pilotage is required at Gladstone, compared with a quarter of that distance at Richards Bay, and to the fact that towage charges have a direct link to port tonnage.

Based on current formulas, towage charges at Gladstone would easily match those at Richards Bay, if Gladstone handled 45 million tonnes annually. All major coal exporting terminals in Queensland have a similar cost structure to Gladstone and, as such, can only be classified as world competitive. The saddest part of this tale is that, after the study was completed, the Gladstone Port Authority issued press releases to all major daily newspapers that ran the Bureau of Industry Economics' inadequate report. Sad to say, none of them printed the truth.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

V.R. Ward,Government Printer, Queensland